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...Australia's magazine of the performing arts.

April 1980 \$1.95\*

# Theatre Australia

Views from Big River  
Spotlight on Julie Hamilton

Nationwide reviews  
including film,  
opera, books;  
National guide.



**CAPTAIN  
LAZAR**

**AND HIS  
EARTHBOUND  
CIRCUS**



**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY**  
**PREMIERE SEASON 1980**

THE SUNDAY SOUTH COAST JAIL  
 CLOSE OF PLAY 1ST FEB-MARCH  
 NO NAMES, NO BACK DRILL  
 TRACED BY MYSTIC THEATRE & THEATRE  
 AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD AFTER-MAY  
 CYRANO DE BERGERAC  
 TWENTY WIVES OF WINDSOR  
 THE PRINCIPAL WOMAN



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## SEASON ONE

(Artistic Director  
Colin George)

### **MYSTERY PLAYS OF WAKEFIELD**

adapted and  
directed by  
Colin George  
designed by  
Hugh Colman

### **KING STAG**

by Carlo Goldoni  
adapted and  
directed by  
Nick Enright  
designed by  
Richard Roberts

### **THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR**

by Alan Seymour  
directed by  
Kevin Palmer  
designed by  
Ariel Barto

### **THE FLOAT**

by Alan Seymour  
directed by Kevin Palmer  
designed by Vicki Patscher

### **THE THREE SISTERS**

by Anton Chekhov  
directed by Colin George  
designed by Hugh Colman

### **ON THE WALLABY**

created and directed by  
Nick Enright  
designed by Richard Roberts

### **THE MASTERS**

— Ivor Novello and  
Noel Coward  
with Jane Brothall,  
Dennis O'Shea and  
Freddie Phillips  
directed by Brian Cranley

# State Theatre Company

#### The Company includes

Robert Weir  
Mark Allen  
Bill Austin  
Robin Hawking  
Jane Bonhill  
David Birchall  
Helene Jordan  
Tom Burdison  
Simon  
Burrell Holmes  
Marise Cochran  
B - J Cook  
Peter Cummins  
Tom Considine  
Maree D'Arcy  
Leslie Dayman  
Veronica Downing  
Michael Fuller  
Colin George  
Daphne Gray  
Robert Grubb  
Kevin Harman  
Margo Hayes  
Steven Hodgeman

Chris James  
Des Jarmes  
Wayne Jamali  
Maggie Kirkpatrick  
James Laune  
Audine Leah  
Val Lewkowicz  
John Lorie  
Betty Lucas  
Susan Lybrie  
Christina Mahoney  
Kevin Miles  
Patrick Mitchell  
Dennis O'Shea  
Tony Prohm  
Jacqui Phillips  
Philip Quest  
Igor Sas  
John Saunders  
Peter Schwarz  
Michelle Slayner  
Tony Strachan  
Anna Varvogli  
Lillian Williams

## SEASON TWO

(Artistic Director Kevin Palmer  
Associate Artistic Director  
Nick Enright)

### **THE MAN FROM MUKINUPIN**

by Dorothy Hewett  
directed by Kevin Palmer  
designed by Eamon D'Arcy

### **WHAT THE BUTLER SAW**

by Joe Cpton  
directed by Kevin Palmer  
designed by Sue Russell

### **BENT**

by Martin Sherman  
directed by  
John Tassar  
designed by  
Richard Roberts

### **A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY**

by Ian Turginev  
directed by  
Nick Enright  
designed by  
Sue Russell

### **THE SHIP'S WHISTLE**

by Gurne and  
Collette, Glory and  
Gold  
by Barry Oakley  
directed by  
Kevin Palmer  
designed by  
Sue Russell and  
Richard Roberts

# State Theatre Company at THEATRE 62 PERICLES TRAITORS

## STATE THEATRE COMPANY

### at **THEATRE 62** **PERICLES**

by William Shakespeare  
directed by Nick Enright  
designed by Richard Roberts

### **TRAITORS**

by Stephen Sewall  
directed by Nick Enright  
designed by Richard Roberts

Lighting Design for all listed  
productions by  
Hazel Levinge

**MAQPIE**  
Theatre-in-Education  
Director Malcolm Moore





# I N F O

**M**em. At Hoopla...

"The greatest man on earth" was the considered judgement passed on the elderly Henrik Ibsen by the young James Joyce, and that is the title of the dramatic collage of the life and works of Ibsen that Hoopla has commissioned Murray Copland to compile and direct. The piece explores the essence of the Norwegian dramatist, tracing the development of his ideas and his artistry through dramatized incidents from his emotional life, encounters with his contemporaries and acted excerpts from over fifteen of his plays. In the cast will be Margaret Clunie, Sue Jones, Gerhard Meier and Joe Spence.

Copland will be working with artist Mirka Mora to mount Euripides' *The Bacchae* at the Playbox in July, the two working together on *Medea* last year. Leading Australian composer Barry Cunningham has been commissioned to write extensive music for the production. *The Bacchae* will be performed, as in Euripides' day, by an all-male cast, which includes Robert Bell as Agave and Peter Ford as Dionysus.

Lloyd O'Neill, a man who has



Murray Copland

strongly influenced the direction of Hoopla since its inception, recently announced his resignation as Chairman of the company. Alan Hodgart, Director of Management Consulting services with Deloitte Haskins and Sells, chartered accountants, and

member of Hoopla's Board, has been elected as Chairman. O'Neill described his successor as having a "talented and tough financial brain combined with a commitment to the arts - a great aim for a Chairman at the theatre."

**B**allet to China... The Australian Ballet will tour this year to South Korea and the

People's Republic of China. The Company will leave Melbourne on June 6 for Seoul where it will stage four performances of *The Merry Widow* in the 4,000 seat Sogang Cultural Center. The South Korean visit is arranged and presented by the Dong-A Ilbo, the AB last appeared in South Korea in 1968.

On June 16 they will leave Seoul for the first visit to the People's Republic of China, where there will be performances of the full length ballet *Don Quixote* in Peking and other centres. The visit to China will be arranged and presented through the Chinese Ministry of Culture.

Peter Salen, Australian Ballet Administrator, said the visit to China would be an historic event and it is hoped that it will open up further cultural exchanges between Australia and China. This will be the biggest theatrical undertaking between these two countries to date. The AB will return to Australia on June 27 on the completion of this, its eleventh international tour.

**T**HE Consensus? Is there an Australian wide consensus as to the aims, values and nature of Theatre-in-Education? Is there a universally accepted interpretation of the term? Probably not, for foreign directors, delegates to the first Australian Theatre-in-Education Conference, found that the diversity of their work defied national definition.

The directors, representatives of companies in every state attended a two day conference, funded by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, in Adelaide on February 20 and 21. The meeting, convened by Malcolm Moore of the MAGPIE State Theatre-in-Education Com-

mittee, attempted to think out fundamental issues affecting the profession.

Fundamentally what appeared to characterise TIE was its depth and diversity - as with all theatrical forms - and the accuracy to search for innovation and extension. Issues of laboratory status, scripting and leading created discussion and uncertainty; but concerns were realised and a positive attitude towards "Getting My (Collective) Act Together And Taking It On The Road" emerged.

Thanks - yes. But - not yet. But certainly a consensus was set up which left so much unaided and nothing was - research, abstraction, exchange of personnel and ongoing discussion could



Malcolm Moore

provide the answers. The proposed 1988 AYPAA (Australian Youth Performing

Arts Association) national TIE study could well afford such opportunities.



Aarne Noone

**I**ntelligent Entertainment... When Aarne Noone was appointed Artistic Director to Newcut's Hunter Valley Theatre Company, before deciding on a programme for 1980, he laid down guidelines for the areas he felt should be covered within that programme. Now the seed he would be producing one classic, one Shakespeare, a musical, a new Australian play, a new overseas play and an established Australian work. HNTC is just into their first production of the season, and with Noone's *The Anagnorisis*. Ansel that have started off with the classic. Following this comes Williamson's *Traveling North*, with Carole Ray in her original role of Frances, and then Noone will join forces with the University of Newcastle and their somewhat larger theatre to put on *Monsieur* with his own company of actors plus drama students.

He has chosen Bechtel for his musical, *The Thermopylae Opera* will follow an introductory season of *Bechtel*

on *Bechtel*. Then comes *Agatha Christie's Andromeda* and the year will finish with a locally written documentary on the closing of the infamous Star Hotel.

Aarne Noone's aim this year is to "establish and consolidate an audience of regular patrons for the whole range of theatre that modern repertoire can offer. We will strive for intelligence, entertainment, provocation and relevance in our work. We want to become a vital part of the region, a lively lived professional company that gives identity to and gives identity from the community it serves. This season has been chosen to cover as wide an area of taste as possible and hopefully any one play will be seen in the context of the whole programme."

He will also be making the Civic Playhouse a more accessible space with live theatre, entertainment, exhibitions and regular Sunday night performances quite separate to the programmed plays.

**T**ributary Playreadings, The Melbourne Theatre Company's Tributary series of rehearsed play readings, presented on Sunday afternoons during 1979 in Athenaeum 2, will continue into 1980. Two of the eight new plays to be read will be given full productions during the next season. The public readings are intended to serve as a forum for the development of Australian playwrights and to offer audiences the opportunity to see works in progress by some of our most interesting new dramatists.

The next reading will be on April 20 of John J F Lee's *Strong Arms* about an RAAF officer and his wife who make an appalling return to

Melbourne after leaving the farm-eating delights of life on an airforce station in Malaysia.

To follow that is *Our Last Dance* by Robert Hewson, a new fable about an old woman with an eye and a sense of humour, young professionals with no humour - her lesson in the early '80s world of pills and spontaneity. John Sumner directs this for May 4.

And Judith Alexander, director of Tributary Productions will direct Steve J Spurr's *When They Send Me Their And Possessions* on May 18. This met in 1965 in a sandy St Kilda dance studio where a sad, witty and charming man fights to hold his 'family' of students to him.



Barry Dickson

**B**anana Bender, Melbourne playwright Barry Dickson's this year Playwright in Residence with La Mama Theatre. His latest play *The Banana Bender* is being produced there.

"*The Banana Bender* is a play on gold in it the central character, Lemmy Jackson (played by Rodrick Williams), signs towards the centre of catholicism armed with quotes from Jesus, god and fiery madness. He is the quintessential underdog, freeloading, roadside hard life worn god in a striped and lambshead alike but also he sees the devil in Tweed Heads Lovers, Stanhope and finally, ultimately, Brisbane, too.

But there is his mother, Kath, formerly branch officer of the Tweed Heads Communist Party, a firm banana-banger. They walk, sing, upstage and try to do each other in with

eight gangster shortgans. Then there is Ruth, a woman of the night from Geelong, who makes a midnight visit in a cab to Jackson's Banana Cooperative. She arrives with live crayfish and Moon champagne seeking of cou de couteau and various violence. She is an amusing contrast to the wags, moody, brilliant, depressed grandiloquent Lemmy.

They all have one colored, noisy, fast-talking, yakkety yakkety yakkety night.

It's good to be working here at La Mama and back performers (Ruth and the mother are played by John MacDonald) are completely professional. I think it will be a good show. We spent on Good Friday and I have enjoyed the services of a Catholic priest from St Kilda to bless the production at the outset. A huge electronic talking banana is being constructed from yellow flesh and will cover over the ticket entrance."

# I N F O

**R**uling Theatre "I always say to my sons, 'Lead the trouble. Robert Marley is the laughing of the Australian World Theatre Exchange Programme on March 3. There's safety in not. There's no safety in commerce any more."

He was commending to a large gathering of theatre and business people at the Sydney house of the Hungarian-born patron of the arts, Clara Dan, the joint work of the Cluden Cultural Exchange Institute, the Australian Council and the Australian Classical Theatre Trust. Marley went on to extol the arts as a more reliable means of social exchange than the Olympics, told Actors Equity it should move with the times, praised *The Club* for its audacity and importance and said if more things like that happened "you wouldn't be swamped with problems like myself. You have never regarded to the actor in your country the status we accord to ours. You neglect the theatre as your poet. Put your money

where it's safe. In the arts."

The programme was launched by the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Filkins, who described the amalgamation Alet as the success of her Sydney International Piano Competition in 1978. Mrs. Dan had begun on a plan to bring theatre companies from Europe on tour. Concurrently the Theatre Board of the Australian Council and the AETI established their world programme for the export of theatre, of which the first mark was the London season of *The Club*.

Now the whole programme will be run from the AETI offices by the director of the Cluden Institute, Anthony Steel. Productions will need to be individually insured and the programme is looking to foreign governments and private industry for aid. It will be good shopfront advertising and tax deductible and with Mrs. Dan's famous drive it has a good chance of raising the status of our theatre in the way Robert Marley demands.

**G**offins on the move... Last year Sydney's new Griffin Theatre Company ran for a month in the Old Kirk Gallery in Surry Hills with a production of Dostoyev's *The Idiot*. Then there was a co-production of *Aleis* with the Theatre Of The Deaf at the Stables. Previous performances of Australian writer John Meech's *Domestic*, *Australia* and *Remo* Freer were presented in the Orange District in Piddington. They also presented a moved reading of an adaptation of Brecht's *Messingliand Duke*

was working in conjunction with John Wilton.

This year the Company has leased Orion's *Shallan* on the Seers and has opened a revival of David Williamson's *The Crossing Of Ford* at the Stables Theatre. The Griffins have taken the lease on the Stables and intend to become a permanent presence in Sydney Theatre.

James J Long-Peach has been elected artistic director and the Company are "spinning their shoulders and eyeballing the options."



Ken Pollock

**N**umbered Regroup... Numbered is beginning to return to its previous company structure. It once more has three artistic directors - John Bell, Neil Armfield and Ken Carpenter - following the departure of co-founder chairman Ken Horler after ten years with the company.

And a new General Manager has now been appointed - Sue Hill, having been Acting General Manager since Paul Hies left for the State Theatre Company in Adelaide - Bruce Pollock. Mr. Pollock has just left his position as General Manager of the Leicester

Theatre Trust in England. He is Australian and prior to moving for the UK in 1977 worked as an assistant to the director with the MTC. During this period he also worked as a freelance theatre consultant and adviser to the Victorian Ministry of the Arts on theatre building.

In 1977 Bruce Pollock became General Manager of the Phoenix Theatre, part of the Leicester Theatre Trust, and in 1979 became GM of the Trust, which comprises the Haymarket Theatre (100 seats), the Studio Theatre (120 seats) and the Phoenix Theatre (275 seats).



Robert Marley



Seating: John Janssen, Mike Mullins, Maureen McGrath, Michael Cusack, Bob Theocryptoff, Anthony. Front: Fiona, Anne, Michael Lusk.

**N**ew Blood, Space Dunge. Performances is an ensemble of theatre workers who have come together to create *New Blood - A Performance*. *New Blood* has been described as 'a fable for tomorrow' by Mike Mullins, whose *Shadowline IV* played at the Pilgrim Theatre and Seymour Centre in 1979. With *New Blood* Mullins continues to develop a fresh approach to the elements of performance. There are, for example, huge back-drops

along the theatre wall and the performing space, the 'stage' is eight tonnes of sand.

*New Blood* deals with a change in the face of Australian culture and the emergence of a new generation. It is a fable set today and moving towards tomorrow in a place where the glare shadow of nuclear clouds take out the sun. The main character of the performance, the new blood, are the White Boy and the Black Boy (Anne and Tom Morrow). They lead

themselves in turbulent times when there is confusion and growing talk of war and duty and ambivalence. They refuse to be conscripted or to fight and so they flee to the desert. But the desert is no haven, the boys are forced, back separately and together to face nature head on. Says the strongest boy, 'It's not a question of whose side you're on - now it's a question of survival'.

Performers in *New Blood* are Peter Flynn, Maureen

McGrath, Michael Lusk, Bob Theocryptoff and Anne Brown. John Janssen, whose last work was for Robyn Archer in *Temple: Lulu Blue*, is the designer for the piece and the audio environment is created by Michael Cusack who has scored such films as *Scarce Boy*, *Dance* and *Child Abuse* Show.

*New Blood* is playing in a new venue - the Cleveland Street Performance Space, 169 Cleveland Street, Redfern.

**F**estival. After twenty years a definitive book has at last been written about Adelaide's great-on-photocopies, the Adelaide Festival of Arts. *Festival? The Story Of The Adelaide Festival of Arts* by Derek Whitlock, traces the history of the Festival from its inception in 1960 through to 1980.

The first Festival in 1960 cost about 190,000. From these

modest beginnings, the Festival grew and expanded vigorously under the guidance of artistic directors like John Bethop, Louis Van Eyssen and Anthony See. Little by little the complex and multifaceted programme of the 1980 Festival with its budget of \$3.5 million, under the direction of Christopher Hunt. The story of the first ten Festivals, their origin and growth is a fascinating tale, it is sometimes explosive with controversy

and accidents, but is more notable for striking achievements.

*Festival?* is not only an invaluable resource book for all people involved in the arts in Australia and abroad, but it also makes compulsory reading for anyone who has experienced this Adelaide phenomenon from the outside and been mystified by what makes the Festival tick.

The author, Derek White-

lock, is Deputy Chairman of the Department of Continuing Education at Adelaide University. He was issued in the massive task of compiling *Festival?* by Doug Loane who was involved with the Adelaide Festival from 1970-1979.

The book was launched during *Writers' Work* at the Adelaide Festival on March 10/74 in making a special offer to its subscribers, details on the enclosed sheet.

**Nimrod Upstairs**  
until Sunday 13 April

## THE HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN

John Anthony King  
director John Bell  
designer Kim Carpenter  
Paul Bartram, Brian Fitzsimmons, Joseph Furst  
Vivienne Garrett, Deborah Kennedy,  
Brian McDermott, Kerry Walker

**Nimrod Downstairs**  
from Wednesday 16 April

## CLOWNEROONIES!

director Geoffrey Rush  
designer Corinne Jones  
Gillian Hyde, Russell Newman, Geoffrey Rush,  
Tony Taylor, Pat Thomson

**Nimrod Upstairs**  
from Wednesday 23 April

## CLIPS

Michael Frayn  
director Neil Armfield  
designer Eamon D'Arcy  
Paul Bertress, Jennifer Hagan, Rob Marx,  
John McTernan

**Nimrod at The Old Vic, London**  
until Saturday 5 April

## THE CLUB

David Williamson  
director John Bell  
designer Tom Sonnenman  
Jill Ashby, Drew Forsythe, Ron Grahm,  
Ron Hadddrick, Ivar Kentz, Barry Lovett

**Nimrod at York Theatre, Seymour Centre**  
from Tuesday 8 April

## PETER BROOK'S C.I.C.T. COMPANY

**14 PERFORMANCES ONLY!**

**UBU** (in French)  
Alfred Jarry  
director Peter Brook

**L'ŒS** (in French)  
Based on a story by Brugu Drip  
by Michel Bowers and Jean-Claude Cernus  
director Peter Brook  
8, 9, 10, 14, 15 April at 8pm

**THE BK** (in English)  
based on Colin Turnbull's book  
The Mountain People  
director Peter Brook  
11 April at 8pm  
12 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

**THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS** (in English)  
Dramatised by Jean-Claude Cernus after  
Farid ud Din Attar's 12th century Persian poem  
director Peter Brook  
16, 17, 18 April at 8pm  
19 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

The tour by Peter Brook and C.I.C.T. has been made possible by the generous assistance of the Association Française d'Action Antiquaire the Australia Council and by arrangement with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts Inc

# WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



By Norman Russell

Seems my warning here last October that Sydney was in danger of losing its most successful theatre restaurant, the Music Hall, was only too well founded. As I wrote, it is almost certain George Miller, unable despite all efforts to reach any compromise with the authorities on fire safety measures, will accept an offer for the property. He told me he feels there is nothing else he can do. None sellargue — certainly not George Miller — against the need for the utmost in fire safety precautions, but it is a pity there was no other way. Apart from the loss to the community, one of the most important avenues of employment and development of Australian actors, writers, designers and musicians will be closed off. North Sydney Council, for its part, acted with such determination I could not help wondering if something more than aldermanic righteousness was involved. No, unless there's an unexpected miracle, the Music Hall dies as it was born, with a production of that hearty old melodrama *Can-Can Love*. To paraphrase that play's most famous line: "Dead, dead, and there'll never be another." Or will there? Here's hoping.

I have always discounted the argument that critics should not review a show until it has had time to run in. The reason is there, no matter which night the critics attend as *Bernadette Huggson* a delightful Barbara Hale in the Music Hall's *East Lynne*, will tell you. She said the opening performance on February 8 was smooth and assured, but as the press night, February 20, came closer and closer the cast became nervous and nervous. Sure enough, on the fateful night, things went haywire. A

spotlight that waned at the wings for a character who did not appear was the signal for a series of mishaps. With praiseworthy aplomb the players ad libbed the scene into one of the evening's funniest moments. Had I been director *Allen Harvey*, I would have had the whole thing written immediately into the script!

The Emileville Theatre hopes to make an early start on its rebuilding program, currently expected to cost just over \$1,000,000. It is to be carried out in three stages and the theatre has launched a fund-raising drive for \$200,000 for Stage 1. It has applied for a capital grant towards this on a one-to-one basis. The old building could not have lasted more than another three years, anyway, but that apart there is urgent need for extra seating to make the theatre more self-supporting. Another reason for wanting to get a start soon is that expenditure on being the old building in line with the new fire regulations would be money down the drain. Luckily, the theatre's new \$1,300,000 air-conditioning plant was sized so that it can be incorporated in the new building.

On the production side, the Emileville was happy to welcome back alumni *Brian Young*, who had been in Tasmania concentrating on his writing, to its current production of *Happo Fushu*, by English playwright, the late *Giles Cooper*. Another happy return was that of designer *Yoshi Taka*. *Happo Fushu* performers are *John Clayton*, *Bill Floyd*, *Ross* and *Hilary Larkum*. Opening date April 3.

On the other hand, Emilevilles were quite and over losing the *Stables Theatre*, which it had operated so successfully as a shopwindow for budding writers, players and directors. As I hear it, the Griffin company will now use it eight months of the year, while owners *Bob Ellis* and *Anne Brooksbank* will present new Australian plays the other four months.

Composer *Albert Arles* (*The Semminal Blake*, *The Gull From The Snows*, *Oh Gosh!* etc.) and his singer-writer wife, *Nancy Brown*, left on February 20 for an extended world tour. In Montreux, France, they will call on octogenarian former musical comedy star *Marie Burke*. Remember her back in the 1920s in *The Cruise From Nowhere*, *Wildflower* — in

which choreographer-director *Frankie Carpenter* was a dancer — and *Francine*, in which *Sir Robert Helpmann* made his debut? The Arles will also call on Marie's daughter, *Patricia*, a musical comedy star in her own right, who also lives in France, as *Angela Var*.

Members of the Australian Opera some eighteen months ago contributed generously to help send colleague *Robert Gard's* wife, singer *Dorcas Murray*, to the Philippines for treatment which quite possibly gave her a longer spell of life than her doctors here were able to promise her. And again, after she lost her courageous fight against the scourge of cancer on February 25, the company, led by *John Gorman* and *Cynthia Johnston*, gave freely to help provide for the immediate education needs of the two Gard children.

Remember *Tiber Radas* and the revues and pantos he staged here a few years ago? *Snow White* and the *Seven Dwarfs* was a handy annual. He's still going strong in America, where he has just been made corporate vice president for the *Resorts International Hotel* in Atlantic City. He is also in charge of entertainment at the company's hotels in *Freemont* and *Nassau*, in the Bahamas. He has also branched out into promoting prize fights and other sports and is now organising a billiards tournament with \$25,000 in prize money. He no longer has any connection with the *Radio Theatre Organisation* still active in Sydney, or with the dancing school that trains those supple acrobatic dancers who were always a highlight of his stage shows.

I hear the Sydney Theatre Company has commissioned *John Romeril* to write the book for the musical based on *Louis Spence's* early Oz novel, *Jessie*.

Doctors have ordered *Jesse Murth* not to undertake any strenuous piano-playing tours. Makes sense. He's 84.

That new United Nations stamp commemorating the United Nations Decade for Women 1976-1985 was designed by *Clara Swanson*.

Don't you hate showbiz advertisements that fail to tell you how much you'll have to fork out? Oh thirty six live show ads in a recent Sydney Morning Herald, nineteen omitted the price of the seats. Two neglected even to give the starting time of the show.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Julie Hamilton

by Tony Sheldon

The first thing that strikes you about Julie Hamilton is her warmth and generosity. She cares so much about your comfort and well-being that, after one meeting with her, you feel as though you have made a new life-long friend. She cautions the same quality in her acting: unvarnished honesty. "I think the basic requirement for all acting," she says, "is truth, and if you're being truthful whether it be on stage, television or the big screen, then it will work." Julie's success in all three fields is proof of the pudding...

Born and raised in Adelaide, Julie was introduced to the theatre at an early age by her father, who had a passionate love for music and the stage. Opera, ballet, musical comedy and drama became an integral part of Julie's childhood.

Julie kept her dreams of being an actress to herself, fearing that people might not take her seriously, her father who might well have encouraged her, died when she was twelve. During high school Julie continued to haunt the theatre, and she befriended a young man who sold records at Allan Music store and who was developing into one of Adelaide's most prominent amateur actors. Dennis Olsen. Before long, Julie was appearing in amateur productions with him but, whereas Olsen would move to Sydney to study at NIDA, Julie stayed in Adelaide to study dental nursing. She signed up for an Arts course to prepare for a teaching career, but pulled out the day before she was due to begin, knowing that was not what she really wanted to do.

Returning penniless from a tour of Europe Julie worked at the Adelaide Hospital to earn enough money to go to Melbourne. Dennis Olsen had told her of a director, George Ogilvie, who was one of the best in the country and was now working at the Melbourne

Theatre Company. Julie decided she would present herself to Mr Ogilvie and ask for a job, but before she had earned enough for the plane fare she heard that auditions were in progress for a South Australian tour of *Pigeonhole*. She read for the director, Les Dayman... and won the lead role of Eliza.

"Where else but in a place like Adelaide, where they were just starting to make acting a profession, would a



Julie Hamilton

girl who'd always wanted to be an actress and never had the guts to tell anybody, and without any formal training, got a chance to audition and for her first role get to play Eliza? I mean, it's insane!"

*Pigeonhole* played a short season in Adelaide (starring Edwin Hodgeman as Higgins) and toured the state for three months. Julie then acted as Narrator for the Marconome Theatre Company's tour of Queensland and South Australia before Peter Raity invited her, along with Les Dayman and Teddy Hodgeman, to form the nucleus of the first permanent South Australian Theatre Company.

Over a period of three years, Julie appeared with the Company in such plays as *Let's Get A Driveway*, *The Queen and The Rebels*, *Little Murders*, *An Adelaide Happening*, *The Philanthropist* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With this solid experience under her belt, Julie felt it was once again time to search for George Ogilvie. She didn't have to travel far. Ogilvie became the next Artistic Director of the SATC. So Julie settled down for another few years with the Company.

In 1975, she decided to make the big move to Sydney for television and film work.

"I don't think I would have stayed so long in Adelaide except I'm a big gaffer, it was security and they were all my friends. I'm not very good at selling myself - not many actors are - and at least in Adelaide I was known. People might have thought, 'I'm sick to death of her', but they knew who I was! In Australia, probably because of the distances, you go to another city and nobody's ever heard of you. I really think we've got to stop that. Somehow we've got to know what's happening in the rest of the country because theatre people are a minority group anyway and we've got to support one another."

Shortly after her arrival in Sydney, Julie's agent sent her to meet ABC-TV producer Eric Taylor, who was casting *Arma*, a tele-play written by Michael Craig and starring John Meillon. The part role of Meillon's wife was still open.

"My old mate John Hargreaves did a good stint for me. It happened to be having a drink with Eric and John Meillon, and Eric asked 'Have you ever heard of Julie Hamilton?' Of course Meillon had to, but Hargreaves had done *Juggles Thru* with me in Adelaide. He put in a good word for me and Eric took a punt."

A very successful punt, too. *Arma* led to more television work and then to

Julie's first film role, as the sympathetic journalist in *The Fourth Wish*, once again opposite John Meillon.

Julie made a brief return to Adelaide as play in David Williamson's *A Handful of Friends* later repeating her role for the MTC production. Television director Douglas Sharp was impressed by her performance in that play, and he offered her the lead role in an ABC play by Simon Berg, *No Room for the Amorous*. Julie's portrayal of Alice Fisher, a mother of three children who suffers the emotional traumas of moving from the country to the city, won her the Penguin Award for Best Drama Performance of the year.

"It was a terrific role, but very depressing to do, because the woman I played was in almost every scene and she suffers a total loss of confidence throughout until, at the end, she's virtually catatonic. I didn't even know I was up for an award! Douglas Sharp rang me from Melbourne and said 'We've got your award', and I said 'What award?' They'd already had the ceremony down there!"

Julie was moved back to the Melbourne Theatre Company to play Gina in *The Wolf Den* and Portia in

*The Merchant of Venice* opposite Frank Thring's Shylock (Thring later pulled out of the production and was replaced by Robin Kermoy). Something of an old hand at playing Shakespearean heroines ("Back in Adelaide, when I was told Rex Cramphorn wanted me to play Isabella in *Measure For Measure*, I kept crying all the time. I was terrified!") Julie enjoyed her season as Portia, although her favourite role of all time is Rosalind in *As You Like It*, which she played in Adelaide in 1975.

Once again television beckoned and Julie spent the next year as Torrey, John Gregg's hard-working assistant in *The Grange* for the ABC. The role was less than demanding, and Julie concentrated on learning the intricacies of television production. Finally, after four years in Sydney, Julie was invited to play Prudence in Rex Cramphorn's production of *Each of the Cuckoos* — her first stage appearance in her new home state. Mrs Suen in Nottroff's *Gullies* followed, and then her third David Williamson play, *Travelling North*.

"I think the Australian theatre owes so much to David. Having gone on tour with *Travelling North* and seeing that people want to see what David

Williamson has written, that David is actually a Star Playwright, is very exciting, because a few years ago nobody wanted to see Australian plays. I really believe in respect being paid to our artists. I love to see people standing and screaming for Joan Sutherland and wanting to give her flowers and dolls, because she *should* be cherished. And David should be, too."

Until April 12, Julie will be appearing in Simon Gray's *Close of Play*, directed by Rodney Fisher, at the Sydney Opera House. Immediately afterwards, she features in her second play for the Sydney Theatre Company, *No Nerves No Pail Dred*, directed by — wait for it — George Ogilvie. So Julie continues to enjoy what appears to be a charmed career, playing excellent roles consistently well, surrounded by loyal friends who, in many cases, are the cream of the country's talent.

"I love acting as a profession and I love actors, it really bugs me when people write actors off as a bunch of spoilt egotistic kids. I think acting is a very fine profession. I like the idea of actually going out on stage with something to give and getting something back from the audience — that's communication."



Julie Williamson in her favourite Shakespeare role — as Rosalind in the SLP's *As You Like It*

# Stephen Sewell - political playwright

by Jeremy Ridgman

If ever tangible proof was needed that he had "arrived", then Stephen Sewell has it. Within less than twenty-four hours his first major play, *The Father We Loved On A Beach At The Sea*, was "launched" by its publishers and his second, *Travesties*, opened at the Nimrod Downstairs. Two plays do not constitute an oeuvre - their author is only twenty-seven - but a mature talent has been recognised which, combined with a profound commitment, is surely set to shake Australian theatre out of its politically moribund state.

It was suitable that the ceremony to mark the publication of *Three Political Plays*, which contains, besides *The Father...*, Spears' *King Richard* and John Bradley's *Irish Sea*, should have taken place on the stage of Brisbane's La Boite Theatre. All three plays had their premiere there. Sewell's tough, uncompromising piece kicking off in July 1978. More significantly, Sewell wrote the play soon after moving to Brisbane from the peace and quiet of Sydney and he owes its genesis to the political environment he found himself in. Politics there, he maintains are "closer to the bone", one is more aware of perhaps having a police record, injustice, deceit and brutality are more overt. For a writer some three years out of Sydney University (a BSc in physics and mathematics) and worried politically on the "last twister" of the Vietnam era, this uncomfortable exile was the perfect catalyst.

Not that Sewell had not already recognised the potential in theatre for exploring the complexities and contradictions of political reality. He had turned to playwrighting because of a discovered facility with dialogue but more importantly out of a fascination with theatre as a form of "directed social activity". His first play, *Katergorsk*, he calls "an allegory

on rape", but it was in his second, *A New Border*, set in fascist Rome in 1932, that his perspective began to develop.

*The Father* is not "about" Queensland, but it is certainly informed by the acrimony to political extremity mentioned earlier. It is a study of right wing backlashes, working class reaction and, above all, the conflict between political commitment and the ties of love, affection and self respect. In this latter respect it foreshadows the tighter, more objectively conceived *Travesties*, with an underlying dialectic of love and revolution. Objections have been raised to the apparent naivety of setting *The Father*... in an Australia of the future, complete with fascist takeover, and to its

**Such a concern with people in politics can only do the reputation of political theatre good.**

apparently disconnected threat of Latin American politics. In fact, Sewell regards the Latin American experience, particularly that of Chile, as a potential scenario for our own political future. (Interestingly, Newca's *Fluxus* makes a similar equating though on a different ideological basis.) Australia, he explains, depends on an export economy, is increasingly dominated by foreign multi-nationals and can expect an accompanying growth in authoritarianism. It is a more realistic perspective to regard Australia as an exploited nation than as a capitalist power in the American mould.

Sewell's involvement with Latin American politics is more than theoretical. He has established contacts with Brisbane's Chilean population and is currently writing a film script on the Chilean revolutionary movement.

In *Travesties*, Sewell has gone beyond what might be considered the

personal obsessions of a committed playwright. Not unlike Trevor Griffiths' *Occupations*, it is an attempt to analyse the contradictions of post-revolutionary Russia. For Griffiths the bete noir is the recent state capitalism which can justify a trade deal with Fiat in preference to aid for the Italian revolutionary struggles, for Sewell, it is Stalinism and its accompanying atrocities, according to him and blind spot in socialist thinking. He wanted to present a coherent analysis of Stalinism as a particular historical phenomenon, dispelling the myth of its inevitability - a myth which might explain the hostility of western working classes to radical socialism.

Sewell's vision is a complex one, matching rigorous political analysis, based on dedicated research, with a deep sympathy for characters, a strength remarked upon by a number of critics. Alvin Sykes, editor of *Three Political Plays*, also comments on "the unusual combination of fierce political feeling with compassion and understanding of the characters..." There is perhaps only David Hare who in his later plays, has used this combination so fruitfully and who shares with Sewell a notable respect for the intelligence and human instincts of his female characters.

"Compassion and understanding" such a concern with people in politics can only do the reputation of political theatre good, dispelling as it does the image of obscure, cold didacticism. However, compassion of the three political plays of which Sewell's is one raises the important problem of defining the species. Let us accept too readily that Sewell's work represents a genre which can be comfortably lived off and thus rather dismissed or ditched to one's bosom, let him, in his move to *The Father*... have the last word. "I've got no objections to the play being labelled 'political', except that it seems to imply that there are 'non-political' plays, a point which I think is dubious. In *No Sex Please - We're British* non-political? ... That the play may seem more political than what is generally seen on the stage merely indicates that the ideological content of Australian theatre is rather one-sided."

# Riverina Trucking Company

by Adrian Wintle

Time has a habit of curing most things: the penalty of growing older is balanced by the fact of growing wiser, so that in process of time contrary abrasive events soften and even tend to acquire dignity.

Some such statement seems necessary in any discussion of the Riverina Trucking Company, the Wagga-based professional theatre group now in its fourth year of existence, and, at the time of writing, about to launch its 1980 season under its third artistic director.

Within the volatile world of the theatre, three artistic directors in four years is perhaps less than extraordinary.

Terry O'Connell, the RTC's founder in 1976, introduced a bold artistic policy embracing standard repertoire, new, preferably Australian plays, rock musicals, and group-driven presentations. Thus *Romero and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the latter utilizing pun-ripped suits, snap-beam hats and Mafia costumes, was often against a joyous *Jerry Christ Superstar*, a stunning *Mates* with a brilliant Sylvia from local lectures actor Colin Anderson, and an equally inspired *Ben in the Dark* of Joe Egg with O'Connell himself providing fine acting values as Brian. A string of other productions preceded these listed events, each bearing the stamp of an individual and magnetic theatrical mind. True, not every production achieved the summit, but in each case a superb vitality was present.

At the end of 1978 O'Connell left Wagga, succeeded in gaining a substantial grant from the Australia Council Theatre Board, and is currently directing the Music Box Theatre which operates out of Sydney's Seymour Centre. But Wagga did not lose merely an artistic director: virtually the entire Trucking Company at that stage deserted the rural scene to try their fortunes elsewhere.

The problem facing Damien Jamison, the RTC's second artistic



director, was thus not simply to extend another man's vision, but to build up a group of personnel from scratch. In addition, Jamison somehow had to place his own personal stamp on the features of the RTC while operating on a milieu compounded of local jealousies and compensations, dispute within the Trucking Company Board, and the overriding obligation to achieve a blend of artistically satisfying plays and box-office successes.

Jamison eventually looked set for a long run. His opening play in the 1979 season, *Never Fools*, and his third production, *Dave, Fish, Sam and Pi*, proclaimed artistic direction of a high order. *A Town To Melboscilled* down to bores as an elegant and smart production, and *Godspell* was reflectively bright.

Just after rehearsal had begun for *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* Jamison left the RTC. Subsequent events probably lie outside the scope of this article and must wait for the softening of time. *Cuckoo's Nest* was in fact staged at another Wagga venue, while the Trucking Company, seriously depleted in male acting strength, brought in Ross McGregor to direct *Female Transport*, a production that swelled uneasily between realism in set design and, with notable exceptions, awkwardness in acting effort.

In late January this year, the RTC's third artistic director, Peter Barclay, arrived in Wagga. Wisely, Barclay spent his first couple of weeks in the

Garden City of the South sniffing out the scene and forming his own impressions.

Twenty-seven years old, Barclay, formerly assistant director at the Miroslav Theatre, told me he wanted the RTC to become "an innovator" expressing "the quality of life in the Riverina." He stressed that "Wagga shouldn't regard itself as second best to the larger capital-city companies", and to this end firmly believes the Trucking Company should introduce new works to the Australian theatrical scene.

Current Trucking Company personnel consist of artistic director, administrator, stage director and two professional actors. The company has already received funding of \$18,000 from the NSW Government (down \$1,000 on last year's allocation), and at time of writing had not heard the result of its application to the Australia Council Theatre Board.

Notwithstanding, Peter Barclay has already outlined initiatives for the RTC this year that include:

- increased activity in soliciting funds from the private sector to cover such costs as theatre programme production;
- introduction of a regular series of acting classes conducted by Debra May designed for community participation;
- a major three-week tour of the Riverina and South Coast of *The Pariah Dog* in May-June, with assistance from the Arts Council of NSW;
- projected work from other NSW professional companies, including the Murray River Performing Group;
- introduction of community project aligned with regional festivals and events, under the direction of Gordon Beattie.

Barclay's primary task in the first few months of his Riverina residency must be to establish faith in the RTC as a centre for vital professional theatre. If the quality of his groundwork can be matched by comparable theatrical standard, I have a hunch his task will be realised.

Time will provide the answers.

# RTC

Riverina Trucking Company  
Season One 1980

Play One  
BOYS OWN THE BITCH  
by Grahame Bond  
and Jim Burnett

Play Two  
THE PUMA-DOG  
by Mick Rodger

Play Three  
LOOT  
by Joe Gorton



# Big River

INTRODUCED BY JOHN McCALLUM

*B*IG RIVER is a huge play. Each of the people writing below has chosen to emphasize a different quality, and they are all right. As Sandy Gore and Anne Fraser suggest it is a play rich with a sense of place and history. On the banks of a once great river ("I threw a branch of leaves into the river. They didn't move. The river has stopped," says Adela) an essentially pioneer society is fading, to be replaced, as the children drift towards the cities, by - what? A new century, a new Federal Government and a new city life will provide some of the answer.

And yet the play, and the central character, Adela Learmonth, remain by the banks of the great river, looking for value and peace in the old world. There may, as Leslie Dayman suggests, be a feeling of optimism, yet there is also a faint hint of alarm at the prospect of the "squash courts of city life." Here the feeling for place in the play becomes powerful. All of Alex Buzo's later plays are set by water, but in the past it has been an ocean which slashes people on outer beds, or swallows their stash, or kills them. Here it is a big quiet river which threatens to rise in flood, but recedes calmly back.

All this in a language and style which show a

new development. Leslie Dayman's comparison with Chekhov extends beyond the subject. Buzo has got to a point where he can give characters quite ordinary lines which resonate profoundly because of the context created. And the language, as John Sumner hints, is delicate, precise and evocative.

So the play demands attention and rewards close watching. And yet there always seems to have been some sort of barrier to an open response to Alex Buzo's plays, for the more self-conscious and convoluted, and less genuinely perceptive critics. The problem is that the easy style and lightness of touch which he has been developing in his recent plays seems to lull people into a false sense of security in their own prejudices. "How can you write a romantic comedy about serious issues?" some ask, and others, as the surface of brute wit slips away: "Your plays used to be much funnier."

Perhaps it is that we are only really used to three styles in this country: the analytically naturalistic, the knockabout, broadly comic ramblunious, and the self-consciously avant-garde. A promiscuous stroller like Alex Buzo does not get the full attention he deserves from some reviewers. He does from audiences but then, of course, don't count.

# Alex Buzo

P L A Y W R I T E R

I have used the term "romantic" in describing both *Makassar Reef* and *Big River*. I did not choose this term to upset world's citizens like the theatre critic Joel Garner - though that is a negative fringe benefit - but because it suggests possibilities for drama beyond the manufacture of consumer goods for market conformists and pressure groups.

I was one of the more vocal proponents of urban Australian drama in the 1960s. The plays I wrote at that time were set in city streets (Plooms and Ahead), offices (The Front Room Boys) or home units (Round). This was part of a feeling that cities were where it was all "happening" and that the outback ethos was a misleading myth.

Now I'm not so sure. I think it was valuable to examine urban tensions for a while as so many personal characters were caught up in them, and it will be equally valuable to return periodically to those settings. But it really is a bit of a dead end, and I think there has been one play too many about "relationships", orgasm, suppression, ongoing or otherwise.

There are other dimensions to our lives beyond the agonistic quest of our life, and *Big River* attempts to put them a few of those dimensions with the figure of Henry and growing up in what should still be called the new world. The focus for all this is the central character of the play, Adela Levensworth, daughter of a pioneer, stranded on the ship in early years, currently engaged in making sense of her life.

*Big River* is not machinistic and is not a thesis, though Joel Garner will assume it is, and thereby miss most of the fun.

# John Sumner

D I R E C T O R

What is the background to *Big River* and the Adelaide Festival? How did it all get off the ground?

The first time I heard about it I was in the UK, a couple of years ago, 1978, and I had a ring from Alex saying that he'd been talking with Christopher Hunt about the possibility of doing a play for the Adelaide Festival of Arts for 1980 and that Alex would be interested in directing it. He had talked to me previously about writing an historical play and I said it all sounded marvellous and let him to read the play, because I like his work, and I've done a few of his plays, so that was the beginning. But he hadn't written the play at the time. He had it in his mind, but he hadn't actually written it.

What is your view of *Big River*?

It's really been a very big play to watch on. It's set in a very clearly defined list of situations. It starts with a funeral, that's the first act, then there's the second act which is a party, the third act is a ball, and then a fourth act, which is a sort of road. But it deals with Federation - it's an historical play - and the fortunes of a family on the big river which is the Murray just outside of Albury. It is a very big canvas for Alex to cover. It's been marvellous really, so come to grips with the period with Alex's particular type of writing.

What are the specific problems involved with period plays?

Well, that's not how we behave today, is it? We don't get

around in those shoes. We didn't rush around in those days. We gave more emphasis in our language to words, we actually used words to a more meaningful end, if you like. One of the more elegant things we've been consuming is actually working a





# NOSTALGIA, TRIVIA

BY RAYMOND STANLEY

*So The One Day Of The Year* is being revived by the State Theatre Company of South Australia from April 18 to May 19. The news takes me back to 1961 and my first professional production in Sydney. I was there on holiday, staying with actor Lewis Funder.

It was an exciting evening at the Palace Theatre in Pitt Street. Alan Seymour's play was presented by the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, directed by Robin Lovejoy, with setting designed by Anne Fraser, and the cast consisted of Ron Haddick, Roy Lye, Nita Pannell, Lew Lutz and Judith Anthy.

Could Seymour's play, one wondered, complete a line of outstanding Australian plays joining *Lawler's Summer Of The Sinnerman*, *Doll and Sepone's The Shipping News*? The audience's enthusiastic reaction left no doubt. And the climax came with a curtain call announcement that the play would be presented in London later that year.

Lewis escorted Patricia Conolly to the premiere, and afterwards she and other friends came back to his flat, where of course the play was heavily discussed. Lewis remained strongly silent.

When the others had left he confided in me:

"The Trust want to send me to London to play Hughes." He seemed surprised, confused. "I don't want to go. I want to remain here."

It was Neil Hutchinson, executive producer of the Trust, who had informed him of the Trust's plans, but it was Elsie Beyer — the power behind the Trust in those days — who had made the decision. Lewis was her "white haired boy."

A couple of days later Lewis had an appointment with John McCallum to audition for the role of Fagin in J.C.W.'s forthcoming production of *Oliver*. When he returned to the flat he was annoyed. McCallum had seemed to like his audition, but now Lewis really

was too young for the role. Bill Rees, J.C.W.'s permanent director, had sympathetically said, "Never mind Lewis — come back in ten years time!"

When asked Lewis most was that McCallum had got stuck into him, angry that he had come to the audition with the knowledge he could not play it anyway, as the Trust was sending him overseas. Hutchinson had informed McCallum before talking to Lewis, it was useless for the young actor to say he had just heard it himself, that as yet he had made no decision.

As a matter of interest, a few weeks later Lewis played Shylock at matinees of John Alden's company's production of *The Merchant Of Venice*, and received much praise.

A fortnight after the Seymour play opening I sailed on a trip back to England. Farewelling me on the wharf, along with Lewis, were two frequent visitors to his flat: his understudy (playing Hughes at matinees), and a little girl recently out of NIDA, who had acted opposite Lewis in *A Taste Of Honey*. John Gregg was the understudy (no good in the ABC's recent *The Gentle Seven*). And the young actress? Her name was Ruby Nerva!

In London frequently I was queried about the Seymour play by an acquaintance who was the play's London agent. No London director had been decided upon, although it looked likely that Leo McKern would direct.

Haddick, Pannell and Lye were uncertain to repeat their roles, but in London no one knew about Lewis, although I had already received news of his departure from Australia. It seemed he would have to audition for the role along with others, including Lew Lutz who had played it in Sydney and had made his own way to England.

My agent friend asked me to suggest an actress for the girl's role. Patricia Conolly, now in London, seemed an

ideal choice. Again, she would have to audition.

I was one of the small group on Waterloo Station that included Ron Haddick and Alan Seymour to meet the boat train bringing Nita Pannell, Roy Lye and Lewis.

First off the train, Lewis behaved like an enthusiastic schoolboy. "I know all my lines," he said to Seymour. "We've been rehearsing every day on the ship." Also rehearsing had been actress Audine Lath, hoping to get into the London production.

Someone — whether Seymour or Haddick I cannot now remember — took Lewis aside and quietly gave him the news: he would have to audition for the role for the London management.

The night before I set sail back to Australia I attended a dress rehearsal of *The One Day Of The Year* (opening two days later) at Joan Littlewood's theatre at Stratford East. Raymond McManus was the director and Kenneth Rowell the set's designer. Both Lewis and Patricia had been cast. Although the rehearsal was stopped occasionally, and pieces of dialogue and action repeated, that Sydney first night magic was all there.

The play was warmly received by the London critics — but did not transfer to the West End. Haddick and Nita Pannell returned to Australia. Lye remained and has done useful work there since, as has Seymour. Patricia Conolly eventually joined the RSC, made her way to America and has done well there, occasionally returning to act in her homeland.

And Lewis Funder, who had no desire to go to England in the first place, has remained there, returning only to repeat his London lead role in the musical *1776*, later to appear in *Some Time, Year Year*, and going back to England disillusioned at not being offered more work in his own country. I often wonder how his career would have gone had he been cast as Fagin.

# INTERNATIONAL

## The Greeks

By Irving Wardle

On the first Saturday in February at the unknown hour of ten in the morning, the Aldwych Theatre was packed to the roof for the Royal Shakespeare Company's first performance of *The Greeks*, a triptych trilogy on the Trojan War and its aftermath from which the dazed spectators finally dispersed shortly before midnight.

To find any other British classical production on this scale you have to go back seven years to the RSC's English history cycle, *The Wars Of The Roses* and on that occasion at on that the adapter-dramatist was John Barton.

Barton's work on the English histories was the company's natural first of Shakespearean business. *The Greeks* lies right outside their usual field of operations, and denotes courage from Barton's personal obsession with the material - one of the great stories of the world which we have never found a satisfactory way of staging and which is largely unknown by the British public. The only solution, he decided, was to tell the whole story in chronological sequence, and to do so in a drama-to-cath aesthetic style, wiping the slate clean of Victorian rhetoric.

Assembled mainly from Euripides, *The Greeks* is the first complete rewriting of the Trojan myth ever to be staged, a safe claim to make on the ancient, magnanimously overlooked the war itself leaving Barton to plug the gap with Aeschylus, a second-view classical tragedy extracted from the *Most Starting* at the beginning of the world with a Herodotus-based Prologue, the cycle runs from Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter at Aulis to her eventual reunion with her brother Orestes seven years later.

Included in the fabric are the legends of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, the pastoral dramas of Hecuba and Andromache, and the comedy of Helen, who, according to Euripides, yanked away the war in a bigger war for Menelaus to come and fetch her.

The text has gone through six drafts since Barton and the Greek scholar Kenneth Cramer began work in 1978. Great liberties have been taken to make the plays accessible to audiences who may not



Left: Daphne (Alison) Janet Jackson (Clara) with soldier and Chorus in the RSC's *The Greeks*. Part 2, *The Masters' Plans*. Donald Cooper

have heard of the Trojan Horse. Characters and speeches have been shifted from play to play, episodes rearranged, original explanatory material removed, and ancient texts conflated. The Chorus throughout is played by women, thus involving a wholesale sex-change in the case of the Agamemnon. And in place of the cleaved didacticism with which previous trilateralists have sought to reproduce Greek meters, Barton and Cramer have turned themselves to a more three-act line and to language as bare as a stone.

Before rehearsals began last September, Barton had various thematic goals in view. He hoped that the cycle would come over as the story of a civilisation in decline, that women would emerge as the custodians of civilised values, and that the production would develop a bearing on the modern world through constant relating roughly to the period between the Edwardian twilight and the age of international terrorism.

In the event, with the exception of the Chorus (ascented as a way of applying Symbol, gossiping about Olympian imperfections, and dropping lines like "Did you fall close to the coast?" which sound uncharacteristically close to Noel Coward), these hopes have worked out with exemplary clarity and force. What Barton cannot have foreseen is the effect of the actors' personalities on the material. He

original plan was to collocate a heavy-tale simplicity, with playing style to match. But the final work is unconvincingly the product of a sophisticated team, and it happens that by far the most powerful passages are those involving complex emotion and complex character.

The cycle falls into three parts respectively concerning crime, punishment, and redemption; it is, as Barton says, "a coherent picture of something monstrous". The first part reflects a world of uncomplicated heroic values that undergo progressive corruption from the moment of Agamemnon's fatal decision to raise a wind for the Greek fleet at the price of his daughter's life. And the development of dramatic interest is co-terminus with the spread of corruption.

This is partly a matter of extending the Chorus's lives beyond the boundaries of a single tragedy. To see John Sheppards' Agamemnon changing from the tormented man of honour in the first play to the petty bully, squabbling over a concubine in Aeschylus, or to see Billie Whitelaw's Andromache first as a distraught war victim, and then as a cheerful exile remarking "these things often happen" in recalling the daughter of her husband and child.

As the last example suggests, one surprise is the appearance of laughter in

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the most unlikely places. Some of the original material, of course, lends itself to comedy, such as the play of *Alexis* which features Janet Suzman costarring as a tomb, dressing herself in ancient Egyptian atomizers, and crowning Aphrodite - "she's so vulgar" - in the baby-doll influences of Lucien Lur.

But comedy also arises in places normally reserved for horror as it does when Achilles' mother brings him the armour in which he is to die as if serving him a hot dinner, or as it does amazingly with Electra, whom Lynn Deane plays as a gooning, raven-cropped Beethoven-Mozart girl, gleefully awaiting the latest death screams from the blood-soaked palace of Argos. "Any moment now," she says, and by the third repetition it has become a laugh line.

I would not deny that some of the emotional effects for which we most revere ancient tragedy are missed by this treatment. But any discussion of the Greeks must start with the acknowledgment that it succeeds as a spell-binding piece of story telling. Beyond that I would claim that the collaboration between Barrie and his daughter, John Napier, who confines the entire work to a bare concrete disc with the tragic doorway displaced to a sidepost has created a world that exists in and out of time, where tomorrow's branching sub-machine guns can tolerably share the stage with old soldiers in full classical armour. Whatever the reservations from classical purists, and they are scrambling away, classical production in Britain will be permanently affected by this huge and audacious work.



## Ladies leading

by Karl Lavett

On Broadway and Gill just now it is definitely a Ladies First. Suddenly New York has a blossoming of leading ladies - all presented in sharing our parts.

Joan Gaynor opened (and closed) in *Harold and Maude*, a sage version of the cult film that starred Ruth Gordon. Ruthie Parsons is singing white-lace in *Good Queen Bees* at Elizabeth and Essex, a new musical version of Maxwell Anderson's

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*Edoardo de Filippo's* And Mary Tyler Moore is succeeding in dying rightily in *When Life Is In Danger?*

But of more moment we have simultaneously before us three leading ladies of the English-speaking theatre. Irene Worth, Joan Plowright and Uta Hagen.

Irene Worth has the title role in Edward Albee's *The Lady From Deluge*. This is Albee's first effort since his 1975 *Serenade* and this time out, Alvin Schramler, as director, a strong cast and in Ms Worth, a true leading lady. We're back again in *Expensive Wood* terrace, a suburban living room populated by three couples. With a familiar background of drinks and games we learn that the hostess is dying of a terminal illness. As one character calls it, "Your nice, average desperate evening." The guests depart and the hostess is carried in pain to bed. From the center of the house Ms Worth re-emerges in a scarlet coat enters with her elegant partner (Eddie Himeant). The pair slowly advance as they have taken possession of the house. And there curtain.

In the second act, Albee continues to bring the whole crew together and the play comes wonderfully alive. He cleverly manages to combine the water and oil elements of *Expensive Wood* and *Tim Albee* and emerges with a moral parable that is, initially, a matter of Life and Death. To be sure, philosophical propositions abound, but Albee's hand in making these dramatic elements has a primarily theatrical touch and the result is occasionally astonishing and ringing.

And through it all there is Ms Worth as an angel of death anyone would welcome. Not is the personification of grace, charm and style reminding us how rare these qualities are on New York stages.

Joan Plowright is starring in *Edoardo*, Edoardo de Filippo's stage version of the 1964 Italian film. Originally directed by Franco Zeffirelli it seems there was trouble on the Road and Laurence Olivier stopped in to take over the chore, in that, his wife's vehicle. Ms Plowright has played the role for two years in London and was acting awfully while doing it. So it would seem important and probably irrelevant to suggest at this stage that Ms Plowright is misapprehended in the part. Yes, she does bring to

the role great warmth and a winning emotional tone, dispensing with the trappings and going straight to its heart. But, oh, she is not very convincing as an Italian. There is something essentially philistine in her pronunciation, something North Country. Ms Plowright's recent coupling with the translator on by Hall and Waterhouse makes it seem that Naples is somewhere north of Nottingham.

In contrast Frank Finlay is pure Magic Italian but the performance of all husband and wife and makes one wonder that perhaps Ms Plowright did it the right way. The play itself is a comedy that cracks in every joint, and in this translation is without a single flaw. Although Oliver's hand can be seen in a couple of lovely credible touches, this is essentially a piece of warmed-over pasta that hasn't travelled well. We in New York like Ms Plowright so little that it is sad she has chosen to go shamming off and let us long.

Uta Hagen is also an actress we see little of. Her reputation has survived a fifteen year absence from Broadway. For her return she has chosen *Charlotte* by Peter Hacks, a two-character play that opened in East Germany in 1976. Ms Hagen and her husband, Herbert Berghof, who is also the director, translated and adapted the play from the German original. Ms Hagen is Charlotte von Stern, Goethe's mistress, and the play is an unusual monologue to her silent husband concerning Goethe and their relationship.

To say that the pace is ill-chosen, is the underestimation of the rare decade. Whatever original charm the play might have had has evaporated; what is left makes for a repulsive, indulgent, one-note evening. Ms Hagen has not great vocal range and even less proved range. *Charlotte* is an ego-trip to boredom. A veil should be quickly drawn over the whole venture and for Ms Hagen a work far better luck, and better judgement, next time.

Joe Caldwell is another leading lady too little seen. However, Ms Caldwell's role as director can now be viewed in a new off-Broadway comedy, *These Men*, which is about the relationship of two women actors and their problems with men. Ms Caldwell easily handles raucy, profanity and madness in this delectable comedy by Mayo Soltes.

A footnote for the observant the material for all four leading ladies was provided by men.

Frank Conroy: Irene Worth and Joan Plowright in *The Lady From Deluge*

# OPERA



By David Gyger

## Historic Lucia - Sutherland's triumph

For a number of reasons, this year's summer holiday production of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Sydney Opera House will inevitably go down in big print in the definitive history of opera in this country whenever it may be compiled.

It was literally historic, in this way, because it came exactly - well, so the month anyhow - twenty-one years after the Cossens Gardens debut of Joan Sutherland in the role that has been more closely associated with her career as an operatic superstar than any other. Though why, having got so close to the actual date, the Australian Opera didn't go all the way and premiere its new Sutherland Ringing *Lucia* on February 17 - even if it happened to fall on a Sunday - the commercial corner of my mind feels prompted to wonder publicly. Surely any financial penalties that might have been incurred in pursuing such a performance would have been easily recoupable and more had it been promoted as a coming-of-age spectacle, or some such other-situational event.

Quite likely, on the other hand, there may have been adverse speculation (even if only subliminal) as to whether Sutherland could really cope successfully - let alone triumphantly - with the role twenty-one years after the event.

After all, Lucia is supposed to be a naive, nymph-like young thing who dies about the stage dramatically during her first scene, who earlier in the opera can be successfully introduced, even introduced,



Sutherland and Richard Greger (Robert) in the ATC's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Photo: Brian O'Garra

by her non-two-ed-in-aible brother and forced into an unwanted marriage in defence of a not particularly venerable family tradition.

Tackling such a role is inherently perilous for any soprano of ample physical proportions (let alone one who is more than fifty years old). Yet in the event all that didn't matter for the glorious voice, or very nearly all of it, is still alive and well; and the massive frame that used to lag about so unconvincingly seems to have been endowed with the priceless ability to sit the clock backwards, from year to year, in consequence of the constantly increasing skill of the remarkable team that operates and controls the Sutherland scenario.

Admittedly, Sutherland had considerable assistance in the vocal division department accruing from the services of the astonishing American makeup man, Charles Egan, who transformed her real life features into just exactly the right face for the role: the sort of young face that makes it quite credible its owner is being continually tormented, *impugnated* (remember that term or do you mean as she gets off stage).

Yet none of the above should be thought

to belittle Sutherland the artist in any way, for the most remarkable thing about this year's summer *Lucia* at the Sydney Opera House was that she emerged from them with her reputation unblemished and her copybook unblotted. They took the wind out of her detractors' sails even as they prompted her fans to seek to outdo one another in the urgency of superlatives. And so they should have.

### MORE THAN PERSONAL TRIUMPH

But this year's summer season *Lucia* was much more than a personal triumph for Sutherland; significant as that was it also reconsecrated the ensemble and the production staff, which was surely the most successful yet mounted in the Opera House concert hall. More successful even than Tom Ingwood's *Aida*, an imbalance, for the way it transformed the hall, atmospherically, rather than just reinforcing and supplementing its inherent character.

The whole towering facade of the recently completed concert hall organ was masked out in black, rising to a multi-cupola overhead supported by fragmented columns of blackened white cast-iron. And, but leading the eye downward to a single portable column rising from stage level,

crossing something akin to the visual effect of mass-made skeletons and skeletons reaching toward each other vertically across the performing area.

It was a considerable coup in itself for art designer Henry Bardon, augmented by a number of excellent meteorological effects: glowering clouds that moved across behind the ramparts, lightning flashes that were realistic enough, particularly in conjunction with the rather nice thunder effect, to be as threatening as commencing a stage storm as one can imagine to enliven the marvellously evocative scene of *Lucia*.

And there was more to be praised on the design front too. Michael Scammell's costumeing was as evocative as Bardon's sets, including some of the most delicately designed beards and changes of hair color yet wrought upon the male principals of the Australian Opera. Indeed, it was well nigh impossible to recognise any of the company's stalwarts until they opened their mouths.

Particularly delicious was Hemi Willden's mock-top Antonio Wood-haired and clad in an effete baby blue suit, and even sporting lace-like frills on the top of his boots (?) Little wonder Lucia shrunk away from him to embrace Edgardo, even felt moved to murder him outright on her bridal bed? But of course that is the sort of cheap Arturo must be, and it does credit to Willden's professionalism that he was

prepared to go on stage sporting such an outlandish prop.

And it was a great visual strength (each of the production's four several scenes started or finished with a tableau that could well have come straight out of an original period painting).

#### EXCELLENT VOCAL SUPPORT

Sutherland's vocal support in this *Lucia* was always at least good, at times, as was excellent. Richard Gough's Edgardo was superbly effective on the lute and vocal fronts, and interestingly duo on the vocal front, he is a mostly pleasing tenor sound that is still quite clearly on the improve but has not yet reached the point where one can sit back in one's seat confident that no disaster lurks at the prospect of the next page. He is a considerable talent from our part of the world (New Zealand), to be praised who seems set to provide us with a good many exciting bel canto nights at the opera over the next few decades.

As always, Robin Allan turned in a fine performance as Enrico, even if there were a few squeaks on opening night when their volume seemed more important to him than satiation of suspense. I have already expressed approval of Hemi Willden's Arturo, and this *Lucia* was blessed with an equally appreciable performance from Robin Donald in the wholly unenviable role of

Normanno the doctor — the poor bastard blundered quite nobly by the chaplain Ramondo, at the very end of the mad scene, for precipitating the whole tragedy despite the fact that even Ramondo himself wasn't entirely glib in the matter (Microfilm, the brief accretory conversation between them, which is a phase an anti-climax dramatically in the immediate aftermath of Lucia's spectacularly colorful form of madness, was deleted in this production).

Clifford Grant turned in an excellent performance as Ramondo — one of his better with the AO to date — and Rosina Radstock was fine in Alina, the only female soloist in the piece apart from Lucia herself.

And finally, of course, a very large share of the credit for the just about unequivocal success of this *Lucia* must go to conductor Richard Bonynge, whose understanding of the score is well nigh impeccable after all these years conducting it at Sutherland. He got the best not only out of a fine team of principals, but out of the Australian Opera Chorus and the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra. All round, this *Lucia* was among the very best productions the Australian Opera has presented to date; it displayed the remarkable excellence of the company to its best possible advantage.

#### NABUCCO — MORE EQUIVOCAL

The other major offering of the month, a revival of Verdi's *Nabucco* dating the Sydney debut of Rita Hunter in the marvellously dramatic role of Abigaille, was a good deal more equivocal effort. The production itself has been around a long time, premiered at the old Elizabethan Theatre in suburban Newtown early in 1974, with Elizabeth Vaughan imported to play Abigaille, it was the second AO offering in the opening season at the Opera House late in 1975 and turned up in a concert hall version in 1978 though Tony Leacock's costumes have remained more-or-less the same and there have been no major changes in the vocal tenor of his voices, over the years.

Despite the often vocally soaring promise of Hunter, and the overall complexity in casting Donald Smith in the bitter part of Ismaele and the rather marvellous performance all round of Margreta Elsom as Fenena, the whole effort was not exactly as satisfying — at least on opening night.

Yes, there was a lot of noise, too much, to be honest. The monstrous scale of Hunter's voice seemed to provoke everyone else in sight to try to shout her down — in particular Smith and the Nabucco of the season, John Skene. Indeed, the promise of this *Nabucco* season was far less impressive overall than most AO premises these days. It was a performance that never managed to



Rita Hunter (Abigaille), Margreta Elsom (Fenena) and Donald Smith (Ismaele) in the AO's *Nabucco*. Photo: Grant Mathews

colours as theatre: one that lingers in the mind as a rather unifying display of competence singing with mutual concern for its ensemble excellence that has always been the main claim of the Australian Opera to artistic superiority.

A fair share of the blame for this important failing must go in retrospect to the conductor and director of this series of *Nabucco*, Geoffrey Arnold and Tom Longwood - not for any positive misdeeds committed, but for their failure (or inability, which amounted under the circumstances, to the same thing) to demand more of some of their principal performers than merely singing the notes and showing off. Because on opening night there was a great deal more shouting than singing, and most of the principals did not emerge from the chorus in a very good light at all.

There were two notable exceptions: Margreta Elkins' Fenena and Donald Shanks' perfectly acted Zaccaria, though he seemed to be suffering a minor vocal indisposition which meant a war rather less full-blooded in total quality than Shanks' usual performance. Though Elkins is not a vocally ideal Fenena - its tessitura lies too high for a mezzo to encompass with ease - she sang all but a handful of notes in the part beautifully, and quite rightly drew a generous round of applause out of each of the three performances it attended during the season for her major innings of the night - the Act IV aria.

She also looked and acted the part quite strikingly even though it was an unfortunate juxtaposition that she happened to draw as Ismaele, for the series of *Nabucco*, Donald Smith - who is a fair low contralto shorter than she is - Sansone's production reduced this problem very considerably, though not capable of eliminating it altogether.

And some of the artists' ladies for these *Nabucco*s ought to go to the Australian Opera Chorus, which sang quite beautifully throughout - not only in the well-known present chorus, but every time they were on stage. Quite rightly, the characters were well applauded - though I could have wrangled the handful of over-enthusiastic parrots who cut them the end of the prisoners' phrases at the matinee by bawling forth with applause before the singing had stopped.

It was a major joy of the other two *Nabucco*s I saw during the summer season that the best cadaver was held sturdy forever - all it was just the echo of a sustained hum dying away melodiously into nothing. Once the spell of the instant had been broken, of course, there was no going back, and the whole marvellous audience was deprived of a great musical pleasure by the thoughtlessness of a few. Hunter, Shaw and Shanks all sang better in the later performances than on



The Australian Opera: *The Magic Flute*. From Andrew Goss

opening night, and Arnold seemed to gain considerable confidence and with it much greater control of the proceedings. Clearly he is a developing conducting talent that will be an appreciating asset for the AO in the years to come.

#### MAGIC FLUTE - AGEING

The other AO offering of the month, a revival of the 1973 Coppel production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which was premiered before the Queen in the opening season at the Opera House, is beginning to show its age a little not so much in the guts of the valuations itself as in the lack of freshness and spontaneity - one wouldn't get quite such a return - that has crept into several of the individual performances.

It had been out of the repertoire for a couple of years prior to this year's summer revival, and quite a few members of the opening night audience had fairly clearly not experienced its gimmickry before at least the laughter at the Australian normal during Tamino's aria, and Papageno's readily admitted cowardice in the orobol scenes, and Gracina Ewer's high camp Monostatos, was as generous and apparently as spontaneous as ever.

Too much of the audience playing was decidedly ragged on opening night, partly perhaps the penalty of the proportionally greater effort that no doubt went into preparation for the opening of the new *Laus* a week earlier. Likewise, many of the comic punch lines were delivered with noticeably less conviction than of yore. Still, there were a number of fine individual performances.

Giorgio Piloni's Papageno, for instance, was refreshingly free of the signs of vocal strain that marked much of his singing last year, married only by the occasional flawed high note. And it was perfectly lovely to look at, gliding about the stage with the aura of purposeful patty that is the essence of the character.

After his major successes in the past couple of years in heavier roles such as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* and Alfredo in *La*

*Traviata*, Arnon Auster hadn't quite fully made the transition back to Mozart and his Tamino was tentative vocally as well as dramatically. Ewer's Monostatos, Neil Warren-Smith's Sarastro and Cynthia Johnson's Papagena were as reliable as ever.

Rhonda Bruce had a worrying first innings as the Queen of the Night, but more than atoned for that by coming up with quite a sterling second aria. Bruce Martin, a newcomer to this *Flute*, was a thoroughly full-blooded and satisfying Speaker.

But the individual personal triumph of the revival was John Pringle's Papageno. He has been sharing the part with Ronald Macanagher, of course, right from the premiere season of this *Flute*, but with the departure of Macanagher from the full-time ranks of the AO Pringle has become senior Papageno by default: some performances later in the year will be taken by John Falford, who replaced Lyndon Terrance when he left the company a few months ago.

In previous years, Pringle has always had but just a little to Macanagher in this particular role: the summer, for the first time, he seemed to have made it absolutely his own - different in detail from Macanagher's interpretation, but just as valid and human and secure. A little less happy-go-lucky and jolly than Macanagher, a more thoughtful birdcatcher, but every bit as good-humoured and - above all - a deeply human one.

The AO's *Flute* has two more series of performances this year, in March-April in Melbourne and in August-September - again at the Sydney Opera House. Hopefully, all the loose ends will have fallen into place once again by the time these performances come up and it will have recovered completely from the setbacks of the Sydney holiday season.

\* Don de Geyer is editor of *Opera Australia*.

# CAPTAIN LAZAR

## AND HIS EARTHBOUND CIRCUS

### PATRICK COOK'S NOTES ON CAPTAIN LAZAR\*

**L**AZAR is a nervous optimist with a varied troupe in perpetual motion about the backblocks seeking a little cultural uplift in a jaded world.

**L**AZAR is usually worried about truth, life, love and dandruff; is baffled by the continuing capacity for chaos, disorder and personality problems of his troupe. He believes firmly that most people have a good act in them.

**I**n this episode the troupe is formed, taken across the wasteland to the little town of Outskirts, a community of ambivalence, indifference, suspicion and comfortably inescapable tedium.

**T**he show is a monumental fiasco, through no fault of any but its component parts.

**I**t is a certain expression of an unconquerable spirit.



*Captain Lazar... a trouper, a ring-master, warrior,  
conqueror of his joy*

\*CAPTAIN LAZAR was first published in the National Times.

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# CAPTAIN LAZAR'S CREATORS

IN INTERVIEW WITH JILL SYKES

The combined talents of puppeteer Richard Bradshaw, cartoonist Patrick Cook and singer/songwriter Robyn Archer have launched *Captain Lazar* and his *Earthbound Circus* on the world.

They are inviting audiences to "gasp at the spectacular cast of dozens" in their puppet cabaret for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, which was seen first at the Adelaide Festival in the Space, and then in the Sydney Opera House Recording Hall.

Captain Lazar will be known to readers of the *National Times* where he sprung from the inspired pen of Patrick Cook. "He just evolved. He started off as spot gags — a not quite super hero. He acquired other characters as he went along, and so he had to have a strip. He started taking over whole pages of the *National Times*. Then, after a while, I think they didn't have any more full pages. I've used him since in cartoons. But working on this, I've had more scope for him."

That is putting it mildly. *Captain Lazar* and his *Earthbound Circus* has just about everything from a whale to a halved Hand of God. Five puppeteers, working the puppets from underneath with rods for their arms, will scarcely have a moment to catch their breath as the saga unfolds.

For anyone familiar with the minds of Cook, Archer and Bradshaw at play, a comment from Bradshaw should serve as an introduction: "There is not one minority in society that will not be offended by this show. Even normal people are going to get a bashing."

It is not a puppet show for children. "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll leave your children at home and you'll be so glad you did," says the publicity blurb.

Fortunately I took a tape recorder when I went to talk to them about their creations. The resulting tape sounds like a *Goon Show*, with subtle, low-key interjections from Cook, an

almost uninterrupted flow from Bradshaw — occasionally assisted by whatever puppet he had at hand — and hoots of laughter, spiced with the occasional song, from Archer.

"Captain Lazar is born," Bradshaw announces. "He is briskly educated. We see him and a friend on a seesaw, discussing their futures and the problems of life."

"Lazar asks the friend what he is going to be when he grows up, and the friend says 'Rich. What are you going to be?' And Lazar says 'Much better informed'. This other kid says 'Pigshit'."

Cook continues: "The rest of the show is basically proving that point. There's plenty of guilt and apprehension and a fairly good circus — it should bring life and joy into the hearts of people who aren't particularly interested."

Traver Wittgenstein, lately of Dresden, is brought forward to be introduced. He is a Professor of Applied Dyslexia and he has a whale in his ventriloquist act.

Then there is Little Hiccup and the snake —





"she dances for men" — and the Cantelcup Brothers, who don't seem to be able to get it together up on the trapeze, Brian the Giraffe King, the Siamese Clowns, the Mighty Quinn with his team of hussies, a white cockatoo that sings Gilbert and Sullivan and Mother Bojangles, who tapdances on the heads of her two pet seals.

The arrival of the formidable Morton Barman on the scene should send a ripple of recognition through the audience. As Bradshaw and Cook point out, he does resemble a prime minister who is not unknown to the people of Australia. "But that is entirely accidental, a passing resemblance."

Morton Barman is a Master of the Ethnic Arts and he has a koala act: they form living pyramids. "He whips the koalas around a bit. They don't really like him," says Bradshaw.

"Lazer didn't want to hire him at first," adds Cook, "but Barman says he will put the koalas down unless he is taken on strength."

Another participant might also strike a chord of recognition: "He is a very imposing looking figure who might have been a surgeon — a dog surgeon, I would think, a surgeon of cures. This figure, whom we don't identify, has already been in public relations and he arrives with a letter of introduction from a friend in the Commonwealth Employment Service, offering to be the ringmaster — which, in fact, he is employed to be."

All of which brings us only as far as the end

of Act I, ending on a rousing song, "The Lure of Entertainment", in which the audience is to be held spellbound by the circus feats of daring: "Fear and wonder make them think there's more to life than life."

In the show, it is played by a group of four musicians who make up a jug band, euphonium, guitar and vocals, fiddle, mandolin and percussion. For the interview, Archer produced the combined effect, with the addition of a sound like a cocky being squeezed.

Act II introduces the town of Outskirts, which is celebrating its annual Oxalis Festival — "it's the only thing that grows there" — and probably the least tasteful character in a show characterised by inspired tastelessness.

He is the town's only hero, now no more than a head on a trolley hung about with medals, and he has a message for the local children: "War did kids like you a lot of good".

Eventually, we get to see the circus — or what the snake has left of it — and hear a few more songs. "Love is as lust as tomato sauce is to sausage rolls". I don't think you could say it all ends happily ever after.

But with any luck, there should be a happy conclusion to what will be nearly two years' work in getting the show together, an idea suggested by Di Manson, publicist of the Manonetta Theatre of Australia, manager of Archer and friend of Cook.

None of it could have been achieved without the puppet-making skill of Ross Hill, who has created extraordinary personalities from Cook's minimalist line drawings.

"While I was only drawing the Captain in profile or full face, Ross manages to make the two consistent, to flesh them out and make them three-dimensional," says Cook.

"Ross is brilliant at making puppets," adds Bradshaw. "It is one thing to make a sculpture from a drawing, and another thing to make it work — which he does."

This puppet cabaret has also brought another dimension to Cook's creative skills. He has written an occasional article and some revue items for students to perform at the Ensemble Theatre, but the story and dialogue for the *Earthbound Circus* is his first real theatre project.

Only one question remains: is Richard Bradshaw looking more and more like Captain Lazer? Will the resemblance grow until, one day, Bradshaw will also have risen to the status of not quite super hero? Only time will tell.



# CAPTAIN LAZAR

☆ AND HIS EARTHBOUND CIRCUS ☆



CAPTAIN LAZAR WAS AN ONLY CHILD, DESPITE HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO FATHER, A PHOTOGRAPHER, WAS KILLED AS FUGITIVE DURING THE WAR.



HIS PAINS PERSEVERED NOW AS A CHILD



AND LATER ON...



FOR SELF PROTECTION HE WAS FORCED INTO THE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS. ONE DAY THE TROOPS RECEIVED A SURPRISE



LAZAR, THE PEOPLE WANTED ME, THEY NEED A LAUGH

GET INTO THE STREETS TODAY, THERE'S NOTHING THE LONG



OFF THEN SET THE SUMMIT, SUCCESSORS STRIPPED IN STREET PEOPLE AND BLOOD



IN THEIR BODIES WAS FULLY FILLED BY SHIP IN THE TROOPS



BORN THE CIRCUS WAS STAGED A BLOODBATH IN HOLYDAY TROOPS WITH THE ROPE



WHILE THE CAPTAIN CAPTAINED PUBLIC SECURITY, AFFECTING NO BLOOD



TAKING ONLY TO DROP A LOAD OF LAUNDRY AND DROPT UNDER A BUS, HE REPORTED BORN



TAKING ALL BLOODS AROUND THE STREETS, HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET THEM BORN TO WORK?



AA AA AA AA AA



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# THE CREATORS

## PATRICK COOK Author/Designer

was born in Weymouth, UK in 1949

He arrived in Australia in 1962 and again in 1968 and again in 1975

His cartoons were first published in *Sunday News* a British paper in the *Review* and then *Walter Review* which still sits at Sydney University. He worked briefly as a book editor with a publishing company and then as a freelance contributor for *Cong*, *The Buffalo*, *Forum*, *Man Only*, *Nation Review* and others he describes as successful. He joined the *Nation Review* and later, the *Argus* and *Review* in 1975, where he remains to this day, writing occasionally as well as drawing. He has done some book illustrations and has two collections of his cartoons published — *Drawing Room* (Currency Press) and *Drawing in the Desert* (Sun Books). He drew cartoons for Robyn Archer's *Kid's Booklet* before it moved and for Joanna Low's concert *Musicians to Measure*. He is currently involved in regular broadcasts with the Sydney radio station, 2GB.

Cook's work is described by his colleagues

"Patrick has an twinkling and overpowering urge to make watercooler (it's the larrakin drink," LEUNG

Cook got here in the nick of time. Australia hardly seems to exist and there seems to be no-one running it. Cook, talking down the heat of political mutterings and wireless optimism, may well have observed it." TETTY



## ROBYN ARCHER: Composer/musical director

began singing, accompanying herself on guitar, while still at school. At the University of Adelaide she expanded her musical interests to encompass jazz, blues, folk, rock and country and also became involved in drama, revue and children's theatre.

After graduation she worked for Adelaide and Sydney club circuits as a solo/duo/singer-comedian.

Her association with the work of Bertolt Brecht began in 1974 with the role of Annie in *Seven Deadly Sins* for New Opera, S.A. Since then she has been described as "perhaps the finest performer of Brecht's songs in the world."

She has performed in *The Threepenny Opera* (1973), *Jacques Bon is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, *The Lamentable Reign of King Charles the Last* (1976) and *Never Join Table*. In 1977 she played in *To Those Born Later* at the National Theatre, London.

Since her return to Sydney she has worked in street theatre programmes, devised and performed in *Kid's Booklet* before (1978) and *A Star is Born* (1979) and most recently toured nationally in *Tongues Lick Blue* (1978).

She has recorded two albums (*The Ladies' Chorus*, *The Wild Girl in the Woods*, *A Star is Born*, *Twilight*, *Lick Blue* and *Rough as Salt*) and written or devised seven musical theatre pieces, including *Songs from Brecht's Alley* which was commissioned by and premiered at this year's Adelaide Festival. In addition, she maintains her own recording and publishing companies.



## RICHARD BRADSHAW: Director

has been performing his celebrated one-man show, *Richard Bradshaw and his Shadow Puppets* since 1969. More than he has been hailed internationally as an leading intellectual in his field. In 1976 he was appointed Artistic Director of the Malthouse Theatre of Australia, for whom he has written *Alps* (1978), a play for rod puppets, directed *Hands*, in the style of stage theatre directed *ANY* in Wonderland (1977) for shadow puppets, written segments for ABC-TV's *The Ring of Rudyard Kipling* (1976), written and directed *Whecks The Dialects* (1976) and devised and directed *Puppet-Plays for our Schools* Company in the same year.

He has had two plays published — *Reviews*, which was performed at the Nimrod in 1977, and *The Fourth Wall*. His shadow puppets were featured in the first series of *The Muppet Show*.

Last year Richard took his one man show to London and Belgium, adapted and directed *The Malthouse Puppets* which has since played in Tasmania, Victoria, ACT and Queensland as well as Japan and the Philippines and attended the *World Of Puppets* exhibition which takes all attendance regards in the Sydney Opera House's Exhibition Hall.

During 1980 Richard will be adapting regional legends for another show at schools, which he will also direct (*Top End Tales*), will direct a new version of *The Magic Pudding* and will visit the World Puppet Festival in Washington, organised by the international association of puppeteers, UNIMA, of which he is a Council member.



# THE COMPANY

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## PUPPET MAKER

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### ROSS HILL

As a student he presented a marionette series on a local television station. In 1975 he joined the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre and worked on fourteen productions with them, some as Head Puppeteer. During that time he produced and directed a thirteen-part television series titled *Adventures of Paddy*. He has also worked with Peter Oldham's Performing Puppet Company and worked for three years, often as director, in children's television. Ross built the puppets for the South Australian Theatre Company's *Ukulele Hecate* and the *Bohemians* (1978) and spent three months in Europe and Russia.

Back in Sydney in 1979 he worked on the construction of puppets for *Thereminings*. The *Grand Adventure*, performed his own cabaret show and started work with the Marionette Theatre of Australia.

Last year, with *The Mysterious Potamus*, he gained the satisfaction of the complete puppeteer — from making the puppets to performing with them.

He has worked with Patrick Goss's designs to make over forty puppets for *Captain Lazer* and *Rex Earthbound Circus*. In 1980 he will build an entirely new rod puppet cast for *The Magic Pudding*.

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## SET DESIGNER

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### RUSSELL EMERSON

was born in Sydney in 1951.

He left school in 1969 and went to work for ICI, where he completed an apprenticeship as a Scientific Instrument Maker. In 1975 he returned to study at the University of New South Wales and his drama course there provided him with the opportunity to combine his industrial experience with an interest in art and the theatre.

Since then he has designed and built sets for many shows, including *Red One Club* and *Theatrical Illusion* for Rex Gramophone (1978), *Outpost* and *Standing Firm for the Truck* (1979), stage manager *The Cyclops* (1979) and assisted with the construction of puppets for the Marionette Theatre of Australia's production, *Footwear Mountain*. Last year he has worked as production manager on *Miss Mullins*, *Shakespeare II* and designed and constructed sets for UNSW student productions *Right You Are if You Think So* and *Private War*.

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## THE PUPPETEERS

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### ALLAN HIGHFIELD

was born in 1951 and first worked with puppets assisting Walter Jaeger on a school tour in 1972. He studied acting at the Independent Theatre and at the same time developed his interests in writing, music and cartooning.

Puppetry seemed like an opportunity to indulge all those interests at once, and so he auditioned for the Marionette Theatre of Australia in 1975. He started work with the company on *The New Tomatoes* which lasted for a total of eighteen months. He came back from the Asian leg of that tour to start work with Richard Bradshaw on *Reps and Honda*.

In 1978 Allan received a grant from the Theatre Board to stage a production of his own puppet play, *Eyes of the Dragonfly*, which he put on in the May school holidays at David Jones and subsequently toured to schools and community centres. Allan designed and made all the puppets and wrote the story, music and songs for *Eyes of the Dragonfly*.

Last year he performed with the company in *The Mysterious Potamus* and co-wrote and presented (with Michael Creighton) a weekly puppet segment for Channel 9's *Super Flying Fun Show*.

## GEOFF KELSO

was born in Perth in 1952.

He graduated from the Acting Course at NIDA in 1973 and immediately returned to Perth to join the National Theatre Company, where he performed in *Devilgoat*, *Kasper*, *The Earl of the Rockablowers*, *A Man For All Seasons* and *The Trial*.

He wrote and directed his own play *The Forest of the Pine Dolphin Theatre* in 1976 and played *Leontes* in *Timon of Athens* and *Just a Paper Moon*, for which he received the National Professional Theatre Award for Best Actor (NSW) and Best New Talent (WA), 1977.

He inspired and directed a mixed-media art event *Pag Fong Kate Wythrop Hall* and followed with an experimental one-man show called *Alone: Tom's Born Jungle Club* for the 1978 Festival of Perth.

Since moving to Sydney he has been writing and performing the *BJJ* media serial for *Pao* and occasionally performing solo, or with Lenore Currie.

## GARY KLIGER

started acting at school in Melbourne, and maintained his interest throughout a university law course.

In 1974 he took part in the Greek Theatre Project's production of the *Orestes Trilogy* at the Phoca Factory in Melbourne (the first presentation of the entire trilogy in Australia) and has also worked there in *Thou Shalt Commit*. He has acted for Carlton's legendary *Le Morte Theatre* (Sydney), at Melbourne University in *Vanda's Pastoral* and *Chicago*, *Chicago*, and at Hôpital in *The Professor's Kidnapping of His Cultured Daughter*.

He has also worked in film, radio and television. Last year, while working at a day job in the insurance industry, he performed in a stage adaptation of *Homer's Iliad*.

*Captain Loner And His Earthbound Circus* is Gary's first puppet production and he finds it an exciting challenge for an actor to make his puppet characters live and breathe.

## JUDE KURING

began acting at school and continued through a degree at Monash University and the establishment of her own small toy-making business.

In 1973 she moved to the inevitable, joined the APG and, in the two and a half years with the company performed in shows like *Kevin Can Jump*, *Mrs. Twitty P*, *The Joint Actors Show*, *He Can Swaggle*, *Stiffing Down*, *One of Nature's Daughters*, *Dimboots*, *A Night in Rio* and *Other Summers* (for which show she was made puppeteer), and *Banbury*, for which she was nominated for an *Erk Award* as Best Actress. She also co-wrote, designed and directed *Night Flowers* at Le Mans and then left for seven months in Europe.

She returned in 1974, to Sydney and the main role in Nimrod's production for the *Asiatic Festival*, *Carole's Lullaby* and *Says No*. She also began an association with *Onibaba* Radio and Garry McDermott which involved her in various television and radio projects.

She spent a season in 1974 with the State Theatre Company of South Australia (which included two solo roles in *And Mrs. Ransom Dances a Little*) and concurrently co-wrote, produced and directed the short-film *Lullaby* (released *The Caroline Chappel Show*).

Her film credits are extensive — *Bruce Rattay Razzam* (International), *The Singer and the Doctor* (1976), *Journey Among Women* (1976), *Temperamental Unusual* (1976) and *The Journalist* (1976). Her most recent television appearances were in *Prisoner* as Norbert Burke. Her credits as writer and director continue to grow.

At the Adelaide Festival in 1975 she performed with Peter Schumann's *Bread and Puppet Theatre*, and met Philippe Genty and Richard Nashchew and cultivated a long-time interest in puppets and puppetry in *Captain Loner And His Earthbound Circus*.

## LINDA RAYMOND

studied Architecture at Sydney University and from 1977 became involved with those famous Architects' Resumes which have, in the past, spawned major Australian talents like *Christine Ridd*. She sang and acted in trios and was involved in the formation of a quartet (a twelve group called *Bower*, whose resident playwright was Tim Gooding). Linda went to the University of New South Wales to study drama and at the same time began singing around local folk clubs.

In 1975 she understudied and contributed songs (also for ABC-TV's *Waypoints*). In 1979 she the New Theatre's *The Rats' Nest* (Horror Show). She then joined the Menzies Theatre of Australia's *Schools' Company* and has toured *Puppet-Power* and *Forever Mountain* through most of NSW, South Australia, and Tasmania in the last eighteen months. She also performed in *The Mysterious Potomac* throughout Australia, as well as in *Jesse* and *The Philopines*.

In 1978 she understudied and contributed some songs for ABC-TV's *Waypoints*. In 1979 she was involved, with John Summers, in establishing *The Tassian Club* in Gt. Gt. as a performing venue. She sings folk and jazz wherever she has the time, and also writes her own songs.



# THE CAPTAIN LAZAR BAND

## TERRY DARMODY:

was born in North Sydney in 1946

In 1964 he formed the now-legendary Original Barrenes Heroes Jug Band for whom he sang and played jug, and he played with them until 1973

In 1974 he joined Uncle Bob's Band, which took him to Melbourne in 1977. Since then he's been in a musical saw band (Lee Deane and the Mockers), a humorous Rhythms and Blues band (The Fabulous Rude), and an eclectic Country and Western quartet (The Gents) as well as working as a solo singer, disc jockey (3CR) and actor (singing in Love Again at the APV)

His current ambitions are to be Bob Dylan, Slim Costello, Bertie Wooster and St. Aloysius, to write songs, learn music and draw comics

## ANDREW de TELIGA

was born in 1951 and has been playing the guitar for ten years. He studied music theory and four years ago began to study violin. He plays acoustic, electric and slide guitar, viola, mandolin, viola, dulciana — in fact, if it has strings he can play it. He can composed many songs

and instrumental pieces and has toured and recorded extensively with artists as diverse as Robyn Aspin, Jimmy and the Boys and Michael Dwyer

His interests in music are just as diverse, ranging from rock to classical and traditional folk — his current passion is Celtic music

## PETER DEANE-BUTCHER

was born in Sydney in 1957

He collects and plays old instruments, in such memorable bands as The Barnhouse Joke Band, the Pressure Toot School Exhibition Band, and in the Service of the Old Apple Trio and Peckin-on-Gumbo. He has also worked as a disc jockey (for 3MBZ-FM's weekly-expected folk show, Barn the Gander Stealy).

He doesn't list himself amongst his musical favourites and has an ambition to be Australia's national aphrodisiac of jug music

## SUE BRADLEY

was born in Oxford, UK in 1954. She began playing trumpet at the age of seven (switching to tuba at fifteen) and emigrated to Australia in 1970. Her performing background has been in many Melbourne music groups and bands: mainly orchestral and brass ensemble, trad jazz and jazz-rock. Her most recent arrangements have been with the Melbourne Brass Choir, The Gents (with Terry Darmody) and The Real Mighty Whacker. Since Wilma's Circus

Sue plays bass guitar in addition to the brass and also teaches trumpet, horn, trombone, tuba, pianet, sax and flute



# SEASON 27

# MTC

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY

MARCH TO  
SEPTEMBER 1980

## Athenaeum Theatre



### Rosecrants And Guildenstern Are Dead

by Tom Stoppard  
Directed by Anne Hynes  
Designed by Peter Coogan  
Commences March 26

An eccentric comedy and to be the last play in theatrical history with a pair of attendant lords in the land!



### The Matchmaker

by Thornton Wilder  
Directed by James Ridenwood  
Commences August 13

Dolly Levi, matchmaker and charmer! A widow long on her own, she is engaged by wealthy matchmaker, newlyweds. Vanderbilts to arrange a match between him and an eligible maiden. But Dolly has her own eye on Horace.



### In Duty Bound

by Ron Clinton  
Directed by Judith Alexander  
Commences August 6

This moving, carefully done is an intimate study of the stresses generated by the illuminating of a traditional European culture to suburban Melbourne.

### Bremen Coffee

by Rainer Werner Fassbinder

### Shakespeare The Sadist

by Wolfgang Iser  
Directed by Anne Hynes  
Designed by Peter Coogan  
Commences May 5

A bleak account of war, life, mass murder, and a comedy spoof on cultural pretensions — these plays are the work of two of the most prominent dramatists from the outstanding German theatre of the 1970s.



### Hamlet

by William Shakespeare  
Directed by John Szustar  
Designed by Peter Coogan  
Commences April 30

The embarking narrative of a prince who is avenged by a ghost to bring vengeance on a murderer — denies his beloved and kills his father — is masterfully controlled by his mother's moans.

## Russell St. Theatre



### Big River

by Alexander Basso  
Directed by John Szustar  
Designed by Anne Fraser  
Commences April 2

Set on the banks of the Murray at Padstow, where the powerful and ambitious river play extends the medical change brought upon the Headwaters family and their way of life on the river.

## Athenaeum 2 NO TICKETS LEFT



### As We Are

Directed and performed by Rosalind Wiseman  
Directed by Don Mackay  
Commences March 31

A remarkable solo performance Rosalind Wiseman has selected an Australian mythology that will make you laugh and cry, think and understand.



### A Boy For Me, A Girl For You

by Jim Neesh  
Directed by Judith Alexander  
Designed by Anne Fraser  
Commences July 7

How do neglected parents cope with life once their grown children have left home? This is a new and most unusual play by Australian writer, Ian Neesh.



### A Doll's House

by Henrik Ibsen  
Adapted and directed by Kay Lawler  
Commences July 2

The classic story of Nora's tale of Torvald's her awareness of her responsibility to herself as an individual — a woman in a hypocritical society dominated by men.



### Bent

by Martin Sherman  
Directed by Anne Hynes  
Designed by Anne Fraser  
Commences June 4

Bent has been described as a feast of laughter followed by a jolt back to the grim. The secret London success deals with the voices that persecution of homosexuals in the Germany of the 1930s.



### The Maids

by Jean Genet  
Commences August 18  
A rare opportunity to enter the world of Jean Genet — one of the century's most brilliant and individual writers. Passion and violence, ritual and fantasy blend to provide a rich and uncommon theatrical experience.

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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MARIONETTE THEATRE



## 1965

The Marionette Theatre of Australia (MTA) was formed by The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust as the national touring company with Peter Scriver as its Founder/Artistic Director.

## 1965-75

Productions included the famous *Tintookies*, *The Magic Pudding*, *The Water Babies*, *The Explorers*, *Little Fella Bindi*, and *The Return of the Magical Tintookies*. Highlights of these years were performances at Expo '70 in Osaka, a six-month tour of twelve Asian countries and a return visit to Japan.

## 1976

The renowned Australian puppeteer, Richard Bradshaw, was appointed as Artistic Director.

## 1977

Bradshaw's productions for the Company were *Ross*, for rod puppets, *Hands*, in the style of black theatre, and *Ally in Wonderland*, an Australian adaptation for shadow-puppets of the classic Lewis Carroll story.

## 1978

New productions were *Wacko-the-Diddle-O*, a revue-style show, and *Puppet-Power*, a Schools' Company production. *Ross* and *Hands* toured to Malaysia and the Philippines. The Company produced *The King of Bungawallop* for ABC children's television.

## 1979

The MTA was established as an independent Company limited by guarantee. The major success of this year was the MTA's production of *The Mysterious Potamus*, which played in Hobart, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne as well as in the Philippines and at the Asian-Pacific Puppetry Festival in Tokyo, where the show was televised to peak viewing audiences. An exhibition of puppets mounted by the Company was so successful that the Sydney Opera House has invited us to present another exhibition in 1983.

An adaptation of a Japanese tale, *Forever Mountain*, was the MTA's addition to its Education Programme.

## 1980

The MTA's first adult production, *Captain Lazar and his Farinbound Circus* will open at the Adelaide Festival and tour afterwards to other cities. The cartoonist, Patrick Cook, has written the show to be directed by Richard Bradshaw, with music by Robyn Archer.

An exciting new version of Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* will tour nationally and a third schools' production about Australian Aboriginal legends will be added to the Company's repertoire.

## 1981-2

Three new shows will be produced annually to cater for the MTA's categories of audience: youth and general public, school-children and adults.

By 1982, the Company aims to operate from its own theatre in Sydney while continuing to perform at the Opera House. It will also continue its extensive touring programme.



# THE LURE OF ENTERTAINMENT

BY ROBYN ARCHER

Now many people ask, why did I choose this line of work?  
They all suspect advantages, they contemplate the perks  
But I am here to tell you that such jobs are heaven sent,  
(MUSICIAN INTERJECTS FROM PIT: "Any job's heaven sent these days")  
I'm talking 'bout the lure of entertainment...  
Now, people are a bloody awful lot,  
They don't appreciate the things they've got.  
You have to belt them into shape, so they produce a grin,  
You have to entertain them to pump their adrenalin,  
You'll never do it in their TV lounges,  
You have to make 'em grovel, make 'em scrounge,  
Beguile 'em with a Big Top, make 'em itch with discontent  
That's the Lure of Entertainment.

See, folks these days believe that life's lost all sense of surprise,  
So you have to give 'em something that delights their jaded eyes,  
The spectacle and colour and thrills you find inside the tent  
Oh, that's the heart and soul of Entertainment.

If you want to make these bastards all applaud  
You're never going to do it by cheap fraud,  
It has to be the real thing when Ronaldo hurls the knife,  
Fear and wonder, make 'em think there's more to life than life,  
Their lives are mean and horrible and vile  
You make them all forget it for a while.  
Wild fauna, dazzling skills, sad clowns their hearts will rent,  
I'm talking 'bout the Lure of Entertainment.

Put that sparkle back into their eyes,  
They'll be little kids who've won a prize,  
Of all the things the Pope won't ask you to give up for Lent,  
It's the Lure of Entertainment.



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# DANCE



By William Shadbright

## Dance Week

At this year's Festival of Sydney, the organisers, for reasons known only to themselves, decided not to hold the usual Dance Week in the Town Hall instead, most of the companies performing were relegated to daytime performances at Hyde Park or the short season in the Cell Block theatre in Darlinghurst.

At the latter venue, Sydney's One Extra Dance Group and Melbourne's Australian Contemporary Dance Company gave a week-long season along with their daytime commitments, and the sole performance at the Town Hall were given over to a five-hour marathon of the so-called New Dance century of the Queensland Contemporary Dance Theatre and the Dance Exchange.

In terms of material and thought it could have been an inspiring evening's entertainment in the event it was a protracted, flagrant live lesson of boredom and pretension.

As I wrote in an article in this magazine last year, the Dance Exchange is a small open-ended group of modern dance devotees and practitioners who only perform when they think they have something worthwhile to show, and even then it is performed without much in the way of publicity and explanation as if they didn't need want an audience and would be much happier dancing for themselves and their band of converts.

Certainly Australia does need an acquaintance with the latest trends in post modern dance and any group that can give us that with a degree of professional quality is to be welcomed, but I think the field is losing whatever audience it may have hoped to attract with its atmosphere of more self-question, confusion and



*Torben and Terrie Tracking Floor Linings*

aware risks.

If we go to the art of dance expecting to be entertained, well, one must look. These dancers go about their formulations (it's the right description) with such pure, joyless determination and serene unconcern for an audience's comprehension that one feels alternatively bored, outraged and downright indifferent. Attention is all in the style and apart from any human interests, which as we all know don't really have to play any great artistic part in dance, the very heart of the choreography - or the movement - is starting to look very tired, time-worn and repetitive.

### DANCE EXCHANGE

The Dance Exchange hasn't progressed beyond what it was doing two or three years ago, they're stuck in a rut. Minimalism as an art trend has already fallen apart, but this group and their associated Exchange company have fallen behind due to sticking to an outworn mode of expression. Ten or fifteen minutes once a year of this bland walk step collapse contract walk stuff is not five hours of it at one sitting, it simply tedious, no wonder the audience left in droves.

Far more interesting and moving (though these things are relative) were the performances of the One Extra and

Australian Contemporary Dance Theatre at the Cell Block theatre.

ACDC was formerly known as the Melbourne State Dance Company and I'm not quite sure what the change of name is meant to signify, perhaps it is a catch to attract some sort of subsidy or maybe a transformation into a more stable and establishment sounding company. Whatever the reason, the ACDC is certainly not lacking in ambition, nor its director Ross Bakker lacking in enthusiasm. He would have to have it because he has kept this company together for the last three years, performing regularly without any form of subsidy.

On the strength of these performances at the Sydney Festival, the company is looking the best and most disciplined I have ever seen it, the dancers are technically proficient and winning in potentiality. The ACDC's main trouble arises from its choreographic content. The expertise in wide-reaching and eclectic, differs widely in choreographic content and is danced with fluctuating levels of ability and expression.

There are some estimable names on the roster of creators, Graeme Murphy, Don Asker and Leigh Warren, for example. Most of the works are early pieces from these choreographers, made quite a few years ago before the authors went on to

bigger and better things, Murphy to his own company and Asker off to the Netherlands Dance Theatre. It is because of this that these works tend to change strangely as the years progress, until at times I feel the creator would hardly recognize his own work. This will happen in due course with any dance piece, as a new work will dance in a different way, but the ACDC seems to me to have tampered somewhat with the actual material in the ballets.

#### CHOREOGRAPHIC WOOLGATHERING

This was even apparent in Leigh Whann's *Transverse Joints—Twisting!*, a ragged piece of choreographic woolgathering when I first saw it, but which now has almost disintegrated completely. As it stands now the work is a strand of single classroom exercises performed with a throwaway method of attack. Its opening and closing movements are run-of-the-mill salon and group symmetrical stretch, set to some wallpaper music by Mike Oldfield and Tangerine Dream. Just like the music, the ballet dissolves from the memory as soon as it is over.

Ron Bekker's own ballet *Evolution* created with the assistance of painter Roger Kemp, started off well but somehow managed to swallow its own tail and leave all sense of logic, progression and form. It is also rather vacuous. Bekker's choreographic vocabulary is alarmingly composed of overwrought, intricate interchanges that may look impressive but don't naturally develop out of what has gone before. He is another one that I wish would relax and look at his choreographic attempts with a cool, dispassionate eye, if only to see how they will be regarded by the

The main problem that the ACDC will have to overcome is its lack of image. As much as I dislike saying it, the company is "just another dance group" without anything unique or personal to define it. It is for this reason that I doubt that they will ever get the substantial subsidy that they're asking (all things being equal). The kind of works they are performing are adequately supplied to Melbourne by the Australian Dance Theatre and the ADP has the full professional resources to do the justice to such works. If the ACDC does want to make a larger impact on audiences and the funding bodies, it has got to carve out a niche for itself, become a company that is totally different in outlook and one that is doing work that isn't being done by any other group in Australia.

#### ONE EXTRA

Sydney's One Extra Dance Company has not yet reached such a position, but it now seems able to be resting on its laurels and wandering aimlessly around from one style to the other, using whatever

choreographers come its way, without realising that perhaps their directors (who have a lot to be desired in terms of technique) are uncomfortable performing them.

This came over loud and clear during their shared Cell Block theme season with the ACDC and more recently at their March-April season at the Stanley Palmer Culture Palace. There are times when I wonder if director Rita T'Au Chan actually likes dance at all so often is he at pains to downgrade its importance as a component of expression.

It's something that has begun to creep into the One Extra's programmes over the past year. I remember fondly Chan's social drama *May Fourth Avenue*. That work was a closely headed piece that used movement, dance and simple gesture in a comically intricate way to expose the drama, joy and hidden frailties within an inner-city Australian migrant family.

Chan's major work for the Cell Block season *Coloured Songs*, was a wild mish-mash of clanking, shouting, singing, chanting and half-hearted dance supposedly meant to show up the way Australian society manipulates and uses its women. His humour isn't merely that we've seen it all before and with far greater impact than in this feeble "jester", but that it is performed with an irritatingly smug sense of consciousness-raised virtue.

In terms of movement, the work doesn't exist. The steps are meaningless, because Chan employs them of content and forces them to substitute as an anonymous semaphoric of abstraction tucked on to the larger drags of his "drama". But even then it doesn't work because the drama itself changes gear all the time, carrying wildly from mind up and ballooney, to serious

delicate theatre and ending up like a languid club cabaret.

His major piece for the Stanley Palmer season was called *Between The Lines*, and it literally was that, mainly because a whole speaking came doggerel about getting old and so. This piece was on a host crossing one's love, doing the ordinary everyday things everyone does and meanwhile reading between the lines the onslaught of old age. If that wasn't enough a male woodcock gloomily about the stage dropping long sticks onto the floor in a row while the female dancer (Carolene Long) danced a few painful catatonies between them, got it? *Between The Lines* was not entertaining but its dance values became a wee drivel of them.

The other pieces on the programme: Graeme Watson's *Overland John Blake's One Street Away* were striking and powerful because neither choreographer distrusts dance as a medium of communication and neither of them fiddled about with extraneous bits of business or obscured their discourse with "effects".

The One Extra Dance Company used to be unique in the way it worked and communicated, now it too shows signs of becoming just as amorphous and degenerate as the Australian Contemporary Dance Company.

The One Extra has got to take stock of itself, ask itself if it really wants to refine dance at all and build up its dancers and choreographers into a team that doesn't keep breaking up and moving away, and thereby necessitating a constant need to absorb amorphous-like anyone or anything that happens to come its way.

If the company doesn't do this then before long it too will become "just another" dance company.



One Extra Dance Company. Photo: Ronny Gains



# THEATRE/NSW



State Rep./Lucy Wagner, Exec. Editor

## Powerfully depressing

### CLOSE OF PLAY

by Lucy Wagner

*Close of Play* by Simon Gray, Sydney Theatre Company Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House NSW. Opened February 11, 1982.

Director: Anthony Fisher. Design: Stuart Gordon. Lighting: Keith Edmundson. Stage Manager: Peter Williams.

Support Frank Henry Daisy Ruth Capaldi Joey Jasper Phil Maguire Rosalind Haysen Brendon John Foster Henry Special Pals Margaret John Hamilton Matthew Andrew Tipler (Professors)

It is debatable as to whether Frank Thring is an appropriate substrate for God but he certainly gives a presence to the catalytic but silent role of the father in *Close of Play* Simon Gray, in conversation with director Rodney Fisher about the play, apparently said, "If you cannot talk to God you can no more talk to your father", and that seems to stand in the structural base for *Close of Play*.

Jasper (Thring), a distinguished academic, sits throughout the piece in an armchair in the drawing room of his large suburban home on a day of lurid rain, and as the passive recipient of confessional revelations from his sons and daughters-in-law. The parallel of father figure with God is established through the apparent need of the characters to reveal and apologise for their misdemeanours - "Sorry Daddy", and "I thank you God and thank you Groups" says Margaret (John Hamilton) "for my Henry". But the impressive Jasper never makes a sound or gesture of forgiveness, nor even of interest if he is not Nietzscheanly dead (as some



David Crawford (Daisy) and Frank Henry (Jasper) in *Close of Play*. Photo: Brian Gray

misprint), the beguiter of this terrified miscreants is indifferent to their agonies and so renders them futile in a meaningless world.

In spite of the over-praise statistics of the play, the picture drawn is an effectively depressing one. The eldest and favourite brother Dick has been killed on a motorbike, but his neurotic widow and his only son are on an outing from his boarding school, Henry, the middle - and at first sight normal - son finds his doctor's life so mediocre that he no longer looks anything for his reproductively prolific wife or demanding patient mistress, and Brandon who looks himself not only lost, but leech, has become an alcoholic last man in a BBC career, and married to a remote novelist wife. There is also Daisy, cousin of the long-term deceased mother, who has always acted as housekeeper but is in fact secretly married to Jasper.

Although the language allows the characters to be played in the more, aesthetically, the metaphors running through the play are heavily underlined. The central image is one of transience and decay, human waste - Dick's body, powder Magpie's abortion, Brendon's divorce vomiting at Dick's funeral, the teen raising of Henry and Margaret's toddler and the final straw to Daisy the

full penny left on the table, the contents produced "for Groups", and the insistent message of the doors - Dick's coffin sliding through doors doors admitting and rejecting the regency office wedding parties at Jasper and Daisy's marriage, doors opening from school to the world, Daisy sending nubby children round to the back kitchen door.

And so Stuart Gordon's set is dominated from behind by an immense structure of opaque glass doors, through which shadowy figures can be seen approaching and departing playing football and walking flanked by transparent passages to bedrooms and kitchens from whence people emerge and return as though from some active, inter-relating life to the compelling sterility of the confessional.

In spite of its title and strongly abusive quality, *Close of Play* comes to no conclusions. The picture of the afternoon is painted in with the lips that make it up, and when the curtain is full the picture stops. It is made up, not of the delicate handwork of manner but of heavily symmetrical blocks of colour which are unconsciously impressive, but lose power in their over-simplified contrasts.

So we have the two remaining brothers, John Foster's Brendon a witty (albeit drunk), exuberant neurotic with an

inferential, epistemological, and historical approaches about the new-culture analysis and 884; colleagues, contrasted with Robert Fink's *solid library* whose commonplace revelations are not highlighted by some otherwise early object about the real relationship with his demanding female parent. And because the series are set in strong relief with John Humble's (emotionally) infamously precise and holy-minded Marlene, admitting no modernist feelings about her children while becoming outraged at Maggie (Jennifer Higdon's cool admission of abortions and adherence to intellectual rather than physical productivity

The occasional monologues make the work, above anything a challenging vehicle for actors and Rodary Fisher's company without exception makes the very most of the opportunities. Gadsden starts smoothly from dry-as-a-bone, albeit without to expansive drink, and in her early reappearance conveys as a righteous child becoming dominant husband. His performance (in perfect with Jennifer Hagan's impeccably-timed, sly, sardonic Maggie whose vamps is struck by the revelation that Dick encouraged her waiting only to end their illicit affair.

With C. McKinnon as Daisy also great help to the comedy of the post-apocalyptic housekeeper, but retains the normal pragmatic quality which allows her to finish the company in the one coo-maternalistic, hilariously obvious scene of the play. Her avoidance here of Jasper's and her wedding illustrates a collective meaning about the death—the one place where Jasper speaks and tries to stir. A device strongly reminiscent of Eliot in *A Jewish Burial* ("Why do we all behave as if the one might suddenly open"), it has no more successful theatrical impact in this play and serves only to point up the already heavy-handed symbolism.

Although the play lacks lightness of touch in its structure and imagery, and presents a very one-sided view of the world that manages to be powerfully depressing, it is equally a joy to see a finely directed and witty production from the excellent company of the STC.

## Failed to convince

## THE DEPRESSION DARLINGS AND OTHER VICTIMS

Figure 1 consists of three bar charts labeled (a), (b), and (c). Each chart has a y-axis labeled 'Percentage' ranging from 0 to 100. The x-axis for all three charts has three categories: 'Respondents', 'Non-respondents', and 'Total'.

- (a) Respondents:** The 'Respondents' bar is at 100%, 'Non-respondents' is at 0%, and 'Total' is at 100%.
- (b) Non-respondents:** The 'Respondents' bar is at 0%, 'Non-respondents' is at 100%, and 'Total' is at 100%.
- (c) Total:** The 'Respondents' bar is at 100%, 'Non-respondents' is at 0%, and 'Total' is at 100%.

*For Deposition, Hearings and Other Use:* created by Terry O'Connell with Charles Kahan. Music by Steve Brown, Michael King, Ken Moffat, Mike O'Mara. Additional music by Bob Greening and David Mathias. Lyrics by Terry O'Connell. Use Music from Thomas Departmental Theory Services Center. Subject: POW. Created: 1984. Release: 1984.

[illegible]

The Band: Steve Green, Manager; Director: Benji Savarin; keyboards: Peter Chambers, vocals and second keyboard; Greg Gibson, bass; Matt Lemberg, percussion; Michael King, guitar; Peter Messer, drums; Wayne O'Brien, guitar. (Arista/World)

The tale suggests a night with Jonnan Lally, but this was, in fact, a "rock melodrama" (come back Policans, all is forgiven), about a thieving cabaret troupe called "the Depression Dairings." At least the second half of the show was about them. It wasn't immediately obvious from the title that what we had here were two



Todd: *Printer and Scribble Games to Maria*  
 Ben's: *The Depression Darlings: Photo: Maria*  
 Redwood

separate shows. Before interval, there was *Order Persons*, a series of songs about hapless characters in post-war Australia, a "rock opera" perhaps?

The opening number on the tape, "Some-  
day this sun is going to shine [in this without  
story in Australia] But we know we've  
heard that line before, we know what's  
next." The audience might have guessed  
from then on it would be a tale of  
unmitigated woe. They weren't far wrong.  
The song continued: "We want to go back  
to the way we were. We don't know who we  
are." Sentimental perhaps, but pointed at  
a time of new depression when people look  
back to the good old days of full  
employment in the 1950s. However, this  
analyst of the way we were didn't go very  
far.

On a Y shaped thrust, backed by a scaffolding balcony which held the backband, we were given a send-up of politicians' "love" for the Queen, and a

sequence about a voodooistic drug, the Andromeda, signifying the passing of "The Eve." That followed the story of a sweet young country girl who found the Australian way of marriage (symbolized as pouring the beer and bearing the baby—unfolding and turned to the farcical as the silver screen. Add a supermarket number, complete with dance for four shopping trolleys, and a song about the housewife's dream, values, and that was part one.

If the situations and characters seemed stereotyped, then at least they were meant to be. The cast played in an atmosphere of half mischief and sometimes acted mechanically, so the characters were complex enough to suit.

This placed a good deal of stress on the words and the music which they couldn't really support. The music lacked originality and if we were men at to respond to the social satire (here this didn't work -) was rather too comfortable smugging at the victims' 'conscious' problems.

Part two, *The Supremacy Struggle*, revealed things were no better in the thirties. A troupe of entertainers, culled from the ranks of the poor by the dastardly Robins brothers, were to perform for our delectation. The good wine had obviously been kept until last which made me suspect that this was the original sin, pushed out with Oliver Twist in all an evenness.

From the moment the audience entered a predominantly black and white scenery, nonetheless, the emphasis was on effects. Two dazzling white felines spun out through the smoke to reveal the tail-coated gargantuan prodigies who were our protagonists. There was a hinting of romance as the two endodromic masses. The strapping troupe were treated with brutal violence and there was the mandatory young virgin danger of rape. The six singers performed in turn and once, an unexpected, song of her seduction (?) by the weakling producer who had presumed to make her a star. As the song ended, the microphone faded, until she was singing unaided and unaccompanied. Valerie Barker made the moment worth all, but the effect was immediately undermined by the next night's commercial.

Charles: Very morning. I was so rested, I almost went

## References

This was typical of the show and symptomatic of an uncertainty about just how Terry O'Connell, both writer and director, wanted his audience to react. Indeed, "black comedy" often calls up a complex response marked by the uneasy laugh, but *metaphors* is a much cruder beast. The production oscillated between playing the ridiculous for all it was worth and more complex effects, and the result was that much of the show failed to connect. A single was drawn from the

stage and the next song and dance routine was punctuated by her screams as she watched. In a different context, one remembers a similar scene in *Cahoon*; it could have been very effective, but it was difficult to take her plight seriously and the result was that the screams simply spoiled the song.

The singers then appealed to the audience for help and explained they were forced to perform against their will (Was that the point? Was their stance an symbol of capitalist exploitation?). They finally turned to their producers, showing one and linking the other, and a member of the audience (seated in front Music-Hall busmen, but it wasn't a response the production had encouraged 'What did it want? *The Depression Darling* was *Cahoon* (Stephen Thomas in *Music-Hall* busmen even looked like Jack Gray) out of *The Road to Nowhere* Show by *Road*, *Fiddlers* etc others in some songs were striking, but unlike *Cahoon* it didn't tell us much about life in the thirties. Were the audience really supposed to take seriously a final song that suggested the poor would come and get them? they weren't afraid? There were some good ideas here and a deal of excellent dancing and singing, including a terrific number about poverty. This was performed with consummate style by Miss Eltona the cavalerie she observed Tony O'Connell also deserves praise for some neat dances, but all-in-all I found it a disappointing evening. It was slick, aggressively presented and expertly performed entertainment, but finally it didn't amount to a great deal.

first music hall in Melbourne with a production of *Ellen* (better known as Mrs Henry) Wood's vintage melodrama.

Now in 1930, the current revival might prove to be the swansong of the Neutral Bay Music Hall. Fire regulations, which threaten the Music Hall with financial impracticability, could force the closure of a kind of theatre which is unique in Australia and the world at large.

Even now the board of society is visible in the absence of Tom Langwood's lush sets, the revolving stage and spectacular effects of Miller's solid days. The Management has had to contain the play within a fire-proof box; fortunately,



however, the sets *East Lynne*, which because of its great popularity in Victorian times travelled far and wide, often playing in a "big theatre" like the present one.

But then spectacle has no place in this melodrama which puts morality before machinery. *East Lynne* is about as strong as Lady Isabel Carlyle, who leaves husband and child (the worthy Archibald and poor Willie respectively) for that sad Sir Francis Loring. After a time on the house of shame, where she is "talked, bothered and bewitched", Isabel resolves to return to *East Lynne*. There, employed as a governess (and her the daughter of an H.Carl's), diagnosed in dark spots, Isabel is once more with Willie, who does without acknowledgement her maternity. "Dead, dead and never called me Mother!" The famous line which tried to get lost in the play's extensive history, have been omitted in Mr Miller's original script.

The scenes of death and betrayal, of repentance and remorse, were there to create Victorian passion and set them on the path to righteousness (righteousness was Victorian, that is. We can hardly expect such emotional interplay to be played straight today, but nor do I applaud the

director's demolition of the play's poignancy, the very soul of *East Lynne*. Among other things, the French Maid's doubling as frail, sweet Williams makes a cheap joke of what should have been handled with greater sophistication. This is not a criticism of Gage Peake who makes a fine Suzanne the maid, but of Alton Harvey who divides his little, his altogether unconvincingly, between playing a creditable villain as well as the director of the piece.

Each scene is played as if it were the only one of the evening. There is a sameness, even a monotony, of the pacing and the acting throughout. There is no sense of development, crisis and resolution. The result is flatness, an impression, an atmosphere, no feeling.

Some relief is found in certain performances. Johnny Johnstone, although only barely seen as Music Hall Chairman and Lord Mount Severn, is endearing and knowledgeable of how to play his part and the audience at the same time. A lesson to some others. One would have thought that Lyn Lovett could have found more enjoyment in the despairing spinner Aunt who has "I told you so" written all over her face. But Miss Lovett was content to act as monophematically as her make-up. Mel Carmichael lived his upright husband to a Chinese Cat's grin, no easy task, being blandly good, and he manages quite well. Christine Cameron has a lot going for her as Lady Isabel, especially her plaintive voice and looks, but the unfortunately ill short of being believable. More the producer's than the agent's fault I think. Michael Fremont was convincing as Richard Hale, on the run from the law, just as Bernadette Hughes really succeeded as Barbara has pretty well.

The programme doesn't give a design credit, so I don't know who to congratulate for the pleasant but cluttered traditional setting which the Management have no reason to make excuses for. A piano guarded on the backdrop makes for some good comedy when it is "played" in accompaniment to some of the songs. Unintentional laughs however arise from the three children's believing in emotional sympathy with some of the most frantic acts and entrances. There is a very loose running gag in the flower arrangements, which kept being knocked over but hung by its anchorage refusing to spill its contents.

An additional production that *East Lynne* at all events the Music Hall at Neutral Bay is a national treasure and must not be allowed to disappear. To have lost the Elizabethan is unfortunate indeed, and to lose a second major theatre in the Music Hall would look very much like condemnation. Thanks Deane.

## Scenes not scenario

### EAST LYNNE

by Barry O'Connell

*East Lynne* by Mrs Henry Wood. Music Hall Theatre. Restaurant. Neutral Bay. NSW. Opened February 1930.

Director, Alton Harvey. Musical Director, A. Victor Jones.

Music Hall Chairman, Lord Mount Severn, Johnny Johnstone. Mr Carl, PC to Lord George, Leonard. Mrs Carl, Cynthia, Lyn Lovett. Jack, Bruce Smith. Archibald Carlyle, Mel Carmichael. Lady Isabel, Christine Cameron. Richard Hale, Michael Fremont. Barbara Hale, Bernadette Hughes. Sir Francis Loring, Alton Harvey. Suzanne, Lita Wilson. Gage Peake (Protagonist).

*East Lynne* has returned to the Music Hall for a limited engagement. Twenty years ago George F Miller Esq opened his

# Vitally refreshing work

## TRAITORS

By Terry Barlag

Authors: By Stephen Sewall. *Named Traitors*. Sydney, NSW: Opened 20 February 1988. Director: Neil Armfield. Designer: Bill Haycock. Lighting Designer: Graham Murray. Composer: Michael Barak. Stage Manager: Ian Stone. Costume Designer: Michele Fawcett. Hairdresser: Sandra Reed. Hairdresser: Deborah Dicks. Makeup: Judith Ross. Joseph's shoes: Lisa Smith. George's shoes: Barry Otto. Ruby's shoes: Lisa Smith. Mrs. Gellens: (Photo courtesy)

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. As a programme note to *Traitors* it reads, despite its grave manner of reference as a weighty talisman. But this proves not to be the case. Sewall's *Traitors* is a remarkable piece of theatre — all the more so when viewed against the contemporary political scene which seems resolutely determined to find a common denominator in modernity. Sewall confronts Marx's night mare with an integrity that is as caught up as thinking as it is richly dramatic, it is rare in the sense has never been proven as others, passionate in its statement but not without an aplomb around himself, it is demanding and in the best sense, uncompromising. Then Sewall is as articulate in as much as actor's delight as an audience's pleasure. The APG demonstrated this last April with Barry Otto's promise. Nurtured have restored the vitality of Downman with this very capable production by Neil Armfield, featuring superb performances from Michele Fawcett and Barry Otto.

The backdrop of history to *Traitors* is Stalin's rise to power 1926-27. Lenin's death in 1924 prompted a bitter struggle for power within the Party, the key figures, of course, Stalin, Trotsky and Zinoviev. Sewall as his extensive programme notes make clear, issues on the issues involved in this struggle, a struggle in which ideological stance and pragmatic decision merge in irreconcilable conflict. Sewall points to two broad interrelated issues. Firstly, the failure of Marx's predicted spectre of Communism to haunt Europe into Revolution had grave economic consequences for the socio-political future of under-developed Russia — consequences brought with difficulties that would deeply affect the individual and the State. Thus, Lenin's NEP ultimately gave way to Bukharin's economic ("Socialism at a small pace") with which Stalin threw in his lot.

Secondly, the question of how much dissent and opposition could be tolerated within the young Party as it formalised itself into "stable" Government. Naturally enough much of this discussion concerned itself with the future of Russia, Party and Communism. The fear of counter-revolution was sufficiently great that in 1933 Lenin, with Trotsky's support, pushed a motion through the sixth Party Congress banning the formation of opposition groups within the Party. This increased considerably the scale of operation of the GPU. Sewall retains the original name Cheka — the embryonic KGB.



Barry Otto and Michele Fawcett in *Traitors*. Photo: John Debus

Sewall's notes serve to focus his interest in a complex historical film and clearly his stance is a playwright. The characters of *Traitors* are particular individuals inserted in the transmutations of mass that Sewall justifiably claims "have coloured the whole of subsequent history". The growth of bureaucracy attenuated his political error tactics of forced confessions and fake trials, manipulated public relations, the whole complex of ideological stance, of personal relationships and even sexual roles makes for a prolonged series of questions. Sewall does not balk at raising and exploring such questions but neither does he pretend to give answers. It is incorrect to suggest, as some have, that *Traitors* is about where the Revolution went wrong — even the Australian flavoured ideas so well rendered by the cast should suggest under-protection. The point is the Revolution, wrong or right is a complex history and by the playwright is a dramatic vehicle, not as a parable play nor as an "event" for a specific point of view. The play's integrity is its lack of neat formulae and slowly but powerfully the gears regulating its tale is woven into the lives of its characters.

I think slowly is an operative word for *Traitors* for, ignoring any pro-epitaphic wish to 1984, the play does move slowly towards its immensely powerful third act. In this Neil Armfield has found just the right pace — no mean feat when one considers that in the hands of a stage director the work could despoil and rely on shock tactics to arrest interest. Armfield's wise command of the work was nowhere clearer than in his initial pairing of scenes to allow an atmosphere richly ironic, humorous, warm but intensely sinister. Memorable were the train scene, Anna's first night in Leningrad, the scenes between Kuznetsov-Lichtenberg. This relaxed approach to the powerful narrative series of Act Three struck this reviewer as a perfect balance of irony and humour. Armfield's sub-text, probing was similarly and correctly restrained drawing us into the atmosphere of the work for its electrifying and high-paced finality. In this it struck me that several reviewers have misjudged the "realism" of the nature scenes. The work, like the juxtaposition of Kuznetsov's torture of Rubin to his love-making with Anna was one of the best pieces of theatre seen in many a month. Bill Haycock's blandly coloured, all-purpose set, railway station street scene was an excellent and with Murray's very effective lighting. Michael Barak's soundstage though fine in itself did not seem to be sufficiently integrated into the production.

The setting was excellent. Colin Firth's Rubin, the southern non-progenitor subjected to Kuznetsov's tortures, delineated more accurately with the ultimate humiliation quite superbly. Initially he reminded me of all too many a porous undergraduate far removed from the pragmatism of political life. "Name Hazlett and Jack Parr brought much humour to otherwise bleak scenes. Lisa Gellens' Lichtenberg was delightful as a study of small-time bourgeoisie on the move since the more breezy days of the Civil War. But Michele Fawcett and Barry Otto quite rightly stole the evening. Fawcett's Anna a woman caught between the implications of her own feminism and her political radicalism was strong, deft, romantic, alive. Anna is the play's most complex character and draws the play's threads together and is the most sympathetic of Sewall's creations. Barry Otto's Kuznetsov was nothing short of superb "worldly", haughty, hopelessly trapped, defeated. One is more and more inclined to a Proustian style of criticism after watching the consistent work of Otto over the last year to effect Barry Otto, damn-you-eyes on, in a damn fine actor.

In this period of organ grinders, monkeys and the like *Traitors* comes as a truly refreshing work.

## Desperate exercise and unique talent

UP IN ONE  
CRAIG RUSSELL

By William Showbridge

Two shows in Sydney, coincidentally at the same time, Peter Allen's *Up In One* and Craig Russell and Friends, were both ostensibly aimed at the general public, who in fact did flock to them, but were palpably focused at the tastes and humour of the "gay" audience.

Both shows rejected in camp bric-a-brac, torch songs, flap presentation and glitz of glitter and pizazz in performance. The "camp" set shivered and whooped at approval and the "straight" applauded mildly, albeit with an air of daring-do.

Campy has always ruled on the theatre, and the camp world has always tried it as an art-form. It is known fact that a fair slice of Sydney's theatre, dance and opera establishments would collapse altogether were it not for the gay patronage. Sometimes this campy theatre

becomes an end in itself because of the hermetically exclusive in price or the "those who know know", according to Peter Allen.

Most of the time, however, it is the vulnerability of the gay audience that makes shows like the above succeed so intensely, or occasionally like "gay" first night audiences whether or not they are of the homosexual persuasion. I often wish I didn't have to attend first nights of shows like this, everything units and teeth, people of moderate creative talent are labelled "genius", and most aggravatingly, the applause "cliques" are out in force, their self-congratulatory whoops proclaiming "you knocked ME out" rather than "I think YOU are wonderful". Later on in the act, when those frantic clappers are diminished and the more restrained audiences appear, the reactions are more reliable.

Peter Allen obviously basked in the obligatory first night Sydney reception for his show *Up In One*, milking the applause and flexing his long-learned modicum around the theatre like so many bread-pollens. Yet, for all the frenetic coloured streamers and silver lace combs, the show is dead. Everything is so overproduced that one ends up clapping merely as a sign of appreciation for all the hard work gone

into manufacturing the effect.

It strikes me that Mr Allen is much more palatable on the turntable than on the stage. Live he gets wasted quickly, he goes flat when he doesn't go sharp and his guitar playing leaves much to be desired. Even some of those lovely ballads that get ample room to blossom on record are gradually pumped up into yet another high decibel wage bombshell, it spoils them.

A lot of the blame for this Radio City, Music Hall approach can be laid on the door of the director Craig Zadan. He never lets up, we just know that each snippet of repertoire is just another breath before the next assault. The hand gets illuminated behind Allen every so often to show what they can do, the projections never cease and Miss Murphy Cross a competent Broadway floater does a couple of songs and dances to not very much effect. The date between her and Mr Allen wrong predictably between the technical cues and the heavy sophisticated without much territory between. The production is single-minded.

So single-minded, in fact, that one in the end tends not to take cognizance of the songs and their hidden depths at all, it is a desperate exercise on the part of Mr Allen to maintain us and to get the best of a good thing before he ends up on the back of the rack.

I really cannot see what the fuss about Peter Allen as a stage performer is all about. If the first-night Manhattan crowd have proclaimed him as their Crown Prince, as the programme note informs us, well they are even more foolish than I thought.

Craig Russell on the other hand doesn't try quite so hard, his own personality rarely comes to the fore, he is selling the carcasses of great ladies of the morning and the cabinet and we can take them at face value, literally.

It is a unique talent of his that can change from the local and vocal exuberance of a Carol Channing to an Ethel Merman in a split second. It is a special ability that can make one's high creep at the incarnation of a crumbling Judy Garland before our very eyes, or the cruel talent of an aged and arthritic Marlene Dietrich redeems in fact.

But it is a demanding talent, memory, and before the night was through, Mr Russell was lying. Bette Midler was a feeble attempt and Barbara Streisand started to sound like Peggy Lee.

Yet for all that, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed a "drag" man who relied on his own vocal talent rather than making ridiculously to a tape, and I enjoyed a distinctive talent who works on that talent solely, and doesn't try to stretch his appeal beyond its natural limits.



Peter Allen

# THEATRE/QLD

Don Hatchelor/State Rep

## Sardonic edge blunted

### THE THREEPENNY OPERA

By Jeremy Ridgman

When the TN Company established themselves last year they began with a stylish, biting production of *Brigbt and Welly's Happer End*, portraying exciting things to come. Is it to benefit from the success of this production or to establish a TN house style that John Milton has looked off in 1980 with *The Threepenny Opera*? Whatever the reason, one worries about the extent to which this infinitely more complex and painstaking musical has become established as an audience polling standby, and wonders whether the decision does not point to some of the pitfalls in, coming out of the same trap twice.

One wastes above all the sensitive, unforgiving design of *Happer End*, indeed as designer is credited in the programme. The set is an unhappy mixture of background

booths, neo-Dickensian street corners and scaffolding towers from which the players observe the action and occasionally throw comments, puns and whistles. The staging manages to convey much of the immobility of the Twelfth Night stage, particularly in the use of a music-hall style catwalk thrown across the theatre between orchestra, pit and audience, from which many of the songs are delivered. But we are still barred to peer into the depths of the upstage area as it were down the wrong end of a telescope, to pick out Gualt Carlwright's sadly underdeployed narrator.

Many of the players from *Happer End* are here again, and in similar guise. Harry Saxon, said his *Champs* also to reappear as *Mark the Knife* and despite the strength of his performance, especially his commanding presence and his stylish singing, does not convey the madness or the sheer dangerousness of the character. Much is after all a veteran of the Boer War and numbers rape among his crimes — no romance here! This, and other shortcomings of the characters such as Michael McCullough's caricature East End Jewish Peasbush are evidence I believe that the tough, sardonic edge in the play has been blunted. Philip Pinner's devious, punk-orientated production at the Cottesloe

Theatre, Glasgow and Wal Cherry's reference to Australian politics in his South Australian production are more examples of how this edge might be retained.

The TN company is a vital one, with an average age, I should imagine, of about twenty-one. Perhaps because of the illness of Pat Thompson and the fact that John Milton himself was on stage playing Mrs. Peachum, that vitality has dampened by a noticeable lack of general confidence. Only Duncan Wass and Sally McKenna give performances of great merit. Wass is one of a number of young actors who have been around Brisbane for some time, but have suffered from the southern star syndrome in the parts they have been given at the state theatre. The subtlety of his performance as Tiger Brown, dealing with embarrassment at unwittingly shopping his old pal, should not be underestimated. Sally McKenna, like one or two others in the cast, has been brought by Milton from La Baine, justifying totally the new policy of exchange of directors between the two most progressive theatres in the city. It is the image of McKenna as *Irmy* that one takes away from the show, particularly of her rendering of the *Pease* *Army* song, delivered with a gravelly voice and with absolute conviction.



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# THEATRE/SA



Susan Yild/State Rep

## Dangerous simplicity

### MEAT

By Susan Yild

Music by David Allen, *Tramper* at The Space, Adelaide SA. Opened 24 February 1988

Director: David Young, Designer: Paul Davis, Cost: George Cullen, Music: John Mc Aule, Dancer: Peter Dunn, Producer: Wendy Mulligan, Make: Helen Barden, Hair: Mollie Gattula-Hubbard, Set: Christine Anderson, Studio: North Collich, Chapman, David Kirk, Rick Steiner, Ruth Hering.

In reviewing *Errol Fenn's Great Big Adventure Book For Boys* last month, I reflected briefly on the current propensity for building new plays around famous people. David Allen's *Meat*, dealing with the rise and fall of Idi Amin Dada, brings up the point again. The practice has one immediate advantage: harnessing a show to a well-established publicity machine provides instant advertising short-cuts. The theatre would be foolish indeed to deny such benefits.

Sometimes, though, the machine misfires. Uganda's Idi Amin has the attributes of Hitler and the charm of a savage gnomie. Public fascination with him does not depend so much on the charms of a personality, but, rather, takes the form of questions, amazed and fearful: how did it all happen? why? what indeed did happen? could it occur again? Any play on the subject must touch on these questions if it is to succeed. And, ironically, any play that does so can only be based on gossipwork (unless it is written by Amin himself).

Thus *Meat* was at a disadvantage from the outset. True, David Allen has lived in Uganda, but he left six months before

Amin came to power and can hardly claim acquaintance with the mighty even while there.

The story is already well-known, Amin is the familiar figure of news media, lecherous, brutal, and impenetrable. Less familiar is 'Major' Bob Aspin, the pragmatic Britisher who would befriend by black and white alike as head of Amin's Murder Squad. Somewhere between these two there lies a play. The one, an ambitious young African soldier, the other a working-class Englishman, repelled at first by the colonial hypocrisy of his fellow countrymen, to become afterwards an unrelenting fascist of twisted intentions. Yet there's a play there somewhere. But as long as the two are Amin and Bob Aspin (or as David Allen called him, Geoffrey Dymond), and as long as the author is tied to documented information for his material, then the play's real concern must remain a closed space between the protagonists themselves.

It was a case where the documentary facts worked against the interests of the play. The scope became limited by fact. People at large were mistaking, 'I knew all this before' imagination has been stifled and flattened into what is now cliché. If, on the other hand, David Allen had combined documented fact with personal experience and let his play in an unnamed African country with fictitious characters, he could have given his imagination freedom to explore issues and relationships in a structure informed not by history but by thematic cohesion.

As it was, *Meat* suffered from gawlish construction. The action arose from a miserable 'sketch from my overseas trip' evening, with Dutton achieving photographs

before reluctant writer, Pauline, took a nearby Sydney flat (upon the Australian connection), whose structure and evident repugnance at Dutton's 'exhibition' did not, however, prevent her from staying for a fortnight's viewing. A thankful note then squashed one minute, threatening murder the next and spent for the most part of the evening in darkness on the kitchen set. Wendy Madigan played her with inaudible vanity.

Henry Salter, in contrast, did little with Dutton, a role of far greater potential interest. Playing only for moments of brooding self-interest or violent aggression, he gave barely more than a pulled repeat of his more successful performance last year in *Dis-Letter*. Opposing him as Amin, Peter Dunn had the most difficult task of all: how to avoid impersonation, with one-to-one dialogue, then characterisation and no make-up. All praise to him that he was able for more than a few moments to make me forget he was what something none of the other 'black' characters achieved. But, hampered by the inflexibility of a strong accent and stiff movements, he offered a dangerously simplistic view of Amin, a view reinforced by the writing.

Perhaps it was as a result of textual weakness that the clarity and visual sense seen in previous productions seemed this time to have deserted director David Young. Not only did he oversee a number-one (and a very) novel stage, but the play as a whole lacked evidence of a guiding hand. David Kirk, in a brief scene with Peter Dunn, was able to shape the material for a while, but, in general, scenes were seldom infused from an overall direction.



Meat: John (Young) and Peter Dunn (Young) as Tramper's Meat. Photo: Pauline Barden

# THEATRE/VIC



1992-1993

**Authentic atmosphere**

11/11/2014 5:04 PM

**How Coding Understands It**

*Authors:* Chosen by Harold Bingham, Mykopyn Printing Company. Opened 1 February, 1962. Subsequent Thomas.

Director: Frank Whuman, Executive	Wally Colburn
Alfred Hitchcock, Sally Chaffin	Vivien Davis
Winger: Jean Seberg, Albert	Michael Fagan
Henry Haggins, Holmes	John F. Lyons, III
Raymond Murray Kincaid	Johnnie Washburn
Franklin, Willie Muscop	Douglas Sledge, Jr.
Heber David Krennbaum	Adri Fagundes Amaral
Shelton, Fred Krennbaum	Sam Washburn, Jr.
McIntosh Agency Consulting	

If Harold Lloyd has succeeded only in creating a realistic picture of a rather slummy part of Manchester in 1940 his play would simply warrant inclusion in the Playhouse of Museum Piece. But he achieved very much more than that (no doubt, unwittingly), fully justifying the National Theatre's revival of the play in mid-1970s, and Frank Hauser's production at the MTC. Parochial though it may seem, with its bleak setting in slum, cellar and back again and the gloomy drizzle of Southwestern England, *Mr. Porter* does more than serve as a reduction to essentials, commercial terms of the subtext-matter of *Love, The Merchant of Venice* and *For Peace* (and, just as *Love* is a reduction to basics of historical tragedy as well as *Merchant* and *Peace*).

When Henry Hobson Hobson's wife died, her domination was replaced by that of his three daughters. At least, that is how he sees things. They are *superior*, and the one thing he cannot abide is *superiority*. They see themselves as *exploited* (he does



San Francisco (Ford Research) from Davis (Fisher, Gibson) and Keith (Cobb, Allen, Gibson) in the MIT's Harvard House Phase I and Phase II studies.

not pay them for working in his shop and when shop and frustrated he will not allow them to marry because it would cost him money for "settlements" and expensive loss of cheap labour! This setting, overtly domestic, is profoundly political where viewed in the light of Imperial Britain in 1888. Luther-Inare (Empress, Empress, Queen Victoria) refuses freedom to daughters (subjects) But the needs of revolt have been sown by eldest daughter, Muggara and grow fast because of father's lack of love.

Lovelessness characterizes all the relationships in *Machin's Chance*, and this absence of any compassion turns into a comedy what could have been cruel life-class tragedy. All behavior is viewed as transaction and manipulation.

The manipulative soprano is Maggie, who comes over in June 1940's strong performance as piano as Lee cut off the *HI* Lawrence, one of their hard, heavy-faced, red-necked, ambitious women as antagonists to the milk and diet of the north of England as are their pub crawling, weak-minded menfolk. For all his bluster, Hobson is a weak Simon Callow is made from a convincing self-made man, and even his, not some is exposed by Hobson when dealing to his money propitiating some-in-law the business about

he has had to put up with from their fascist  
users. But the final scene of Holston's  
disappearance, downfall and capitulation to  
Mugabe lacked suspense and conviction.

Maggie, a lovely Egyptian Harcourt is Willie's poor worm of a fellow who makes fine shoes at the cobbler. Harcourt of Willie is nothing less than an attention to the advantage of both parties. Douglas Hodge provided a most satisfying character (comedy), moving from downcasted humbleness to well-deserved confidence with a delicate sense of gradation, culminating victoriously (the great applause) in his becoming the owner of Holborn's business. Maggie proudly realizes that the cobbler, in achieving the has given her - teaching her to write on a clay tablet whenever such as "There is always room at the top" and "Great things come from small" have been said. She has made a case of her

Frank Hammers' production succeeds through its down-to-earth lack of sentimentality and authentic creation of atmosphere. If the northern accents sounded stilted, at least they never slipped. Hugh Colman's networking set was perfectly adequate apart from the lack of a Hobson's Improvisers which looked more like plucky Restoration Parks than the wacky Victorian Ballroom.

# Sore throats

## SORE THROATS

by Catherine Peake

*After Filmmaker Howard Barker's Dark Throat Is From London, Melbourne, Vic. Opened February 26, 1990. Director: Wilfred Liss. Screenplay directed: Richard Murphy, Set: Andrew Murray, Laurie Kneff, Script Manager: Linda Blumson. Jack: Wilfred Liss, Judy: Fay McKean, Sally: Marlene G. Demmel. (Professionals)*

"I have heard that love making can give you a swollen throat. I don't want one. But the wrong boys. I have heard, can give you a swollen throat too. So I shan't be able to avoid it." - (Berloff, Berloff)

The "sore throats" in Howard Barker's play swing in the world of sexual politics and love. The sore throats belong to two women and a man who variously devote themselves to a peripatetic and often spectacular experience with "freedom" and liberated sex.

The material is familiar, and Barker exploits the familiarity to develop a highly detailed world of "raging" violence, tenderness, and claustrophobia. His actions are harsh. The pressures on his characters are extreme and unrelenting. Though there are moments when some glimmer of understanding or some brief moment of personal equilibrium is achieved, these tend to be lost in an ever-rolling tide of anxiety and frustration.

The play is a bell-ringer of sorts. Jack has divorced Judy because he loathes the marriage; neither was equated, and most of the first half is given over to well-worn routines of violence in a re-birth of their twenty years together.

It is not within the confines of Judy's life - a hostile and anonymous space in which issues of personal liberation quickly degenerate into taunts, barbs and sadomasochism. An open proscenium has on stage most of the time.

Fay McKean's Judy is short, intelligent, ambivalent and already partly destroyed by her own impulses to self-mutilation. Later, she is joined by Sally - a sadistic and cynical youngster, who moves

into the film and becomes her accomplice on a campaign which takes them on trains, neon-lit holidays, and into the world of drugs and New York single bars.

Both women are portrayed as brittle, anxious and punch drunk, and their relationship veers erratically from a tired worldly wisdom to brief passages of real compassion and understanding.

But the most striking passage of the play occurs in the second half when Jack (Wilfred Liss), recounts his experiences as a "mob-husband" on a deserted road in Canada.

At the Pram Factory, *Sore Throat* is played rather fast. Directors Wilfred Liss and Richard Murphy work with a bold and confrontational style that is enmeshed by a small stage and a stark minimalist set. They have made an atmospheric London scene, and come to tell us the casual violence, the ambiguity or the contradictions of Barker's script.

In the end, their *Sore Throat* is demanding and mostly black theatre which offers little in the way of respite from its commitment to the harsh and often ugly struggle for identity and survival.



Fay McKean and Marlene G. Demmel in the RPT's *Sore Throat*

## Small space acting

### CARBONI THE JAIL DIARY OF ALBIE SACHS

By Garrie Hutchinson

*Carboni by John Ramond. Produced by John Tynan for the Australian Performing Group. The Alibi Management Co and the Victorian Arts Council (From Factors, Cullinon Yel, Gippsland, February 1988). Director: Bill Hamilton. Designer: Tonia Parker Stage Manager: Paul Hampton. 4 actors: Bruce Spence, Michael Paul Turner (Apostrophes).*

*The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs by David Edgar. Melbourne Theatre Company. 1 primary Productions. Melbourne 2. Melbourne Vic. Opened March 1988. Director: Judith Ainsworth. Designer: Robert Hume. Lighting: Simon Lewis. Stage Manager: Peter Salmon. 4th Actor: David Downer, with James Walsh, John Newman, Anthony Hardin, Gary Day, Brian Arnold, Gary Owen, Bruce Kerr (Peaches).*

Bruce Spence and David Downer are two of Melbourne's more respected actors; they are both performers who put in, however idiosyncratic their performances might be. The differences and similarities in the ways they cope with small space, close-up acting are interesting because Spence and Downer are "products" of the two major acting traditions extant in Australia at the moment.

David Downer comes from the NIDA (now Eng. Rep. MTC) school of acting, which is not to disparage at all. The trained actor (whatever we might think about the training or any of the terminology (method only) is associated to our theatre as a Williamian lie.

This actor now provides a relatively unexplored voice but one capable of sustaining a (size of this place or that or occurring or declining). He provides a level of physical activity that can fight hair-raisingly or crack like in ruffles in an Elizabethan parlour. He can play the pig, dyes in drag, carry spurs, go down a mine, be a cop, an Asian, and even a black from time to time. In short the trained actor has a bag of skills which enable him to play the character in nighty.

Bruce Spence on the other hand is an eccentric actor who has more or less trained himself on the job. Not NIDA, but La Mama, where acting for a long time was being present, being a presence, and speaking. Because of his extremely tall, extremely skeletal physique he has a certain shock value, and he's developed from the terse Skel to the loquacious Carboni through any number of previous

impersonations, caricatures, and personae he has. Compared to the "trained" actor, Spence and his cohorts in Melbourne are behaving actors, they seem not so much committed to the craft of Acting with its attendant baggage, as to the passionate presence, to performance.

Spence, however awkward he might appear (like similarly experienced actors Max Gillies and Peter Campling) on the production stage, is a vastly experienced actor in the small, open space. The things that have happened to him in those spaces over the last ten years or so make anything conventional theatre seem like Lennox Bruce's vision of heaven. In Carboni, in the Prison Factory, he has an assistance born of a belief that he has a starting place on the place, which is not far from the truth.

Up in Apostrophes 2, though, Downer is part of an experiment in the creation of a "new actor audience relationship", according to John Sommer. He is not really experienced in acting in this most Prison Factory like space. How both actors seize their space and characters is very interesting. Because small space theatres are almost exclusively actor's theatres not director's or designer's, but actor's theatres.

The differences in style start, obviously with the text. Both plays are adaptations of factual works of prose. The one, John Ramond's adaptation of Raffaele Carboni's account of the Eureka Stockade, the other David Edgar's of Albie Sachs' South African prison diary.

Ramond isn't interested in making us believe we are emotionally there at Eureka, he wants us in a "brotherhood" kind of way, to have the facts as Carboni experienced them, and to decide for ourselves to come down on the side of truth and justice. On Carboni's side, on the side of Australian nationalism, and the side of the Eureka flag. He also set himself the discipline of using only Carboni's words, which has led to a highly witty account of the events.

The text then requires the actor to give an unglorified performance, not a performance to make us believe we are really there. We know, from the substance of the theatre, that Spence and the crew are believers, but we also know from the design of the show, and from the first time Spence gives one of his huge character-breaking grins that we are in the presence of an actor acting. He adopts gestures as they fit the words, not in an effort to create a consistent, growing character-in-the-play. He changes costume from Italianate to Irish-Australian to his own where the speech is written down by Carboni changes. He is not attempting the reality of the simple-the-dread-ful-the-violence school of close-up acting. He is an un-naturalistic actor.

This is directly opposed to the naturalism made of close-up acting. In *Albie Sachs* the writer demands, and the actor provides an attempt at the experience, being written and performed. In this case the feeling of being pushed in solitude under the South African 90 180 centimeter laws.

This play even demands, in an effort to get the audience to *watch* feel, that we sit in silence for two minutes while the actor does nothing.

Prior to this he has talked at some length about how we cannot experience what he, experiencing the real Albie Sachs has felt. He has shown us the sort of things he (Albie) did, he has reacted on us, exercised in front of us, motivated for as Albie, as we cannot really experience what the actor experienced, so the actor cannot substitute for Albie Sachs, so the real Albie Sachs (and this is the point of the play) cannot, as a whole, have the same experience as the blacks. Whilst Albie was enduring solitary, the blacks were being tortured with sleep deprivation, and when he moves on to that they are being murdered. Such is the fact of even the most sincerely experimental of white liberals. They can never become the other.

Theatricality, this is a most interestingly disconcerting point. Because we, the audience cannot, no matter how much the actor wants, experience anything for Albie. Even if we abolish the fourth wall of postmodern theatre, we still cannot stand the light of the arena.

David Downer, in *Albie Sachs*, is acting (well) for all he is worth.

Great acting in a conventional theatre is a special convergence of energy, commitment, skill and passion that is powerful enough to make the theatre smaller. That is why it is so rare, and so much easier in small open space arenas.

And then, the acting from Spence and Downer, was what I enjoyed most. The direction of both shows was a bit painful, though the obvious the characterisation, probably ought to be led at the door of the writers. There simply wasn't enough happening. In Carboni's case the bag event, he missed out on the actual Eureka battle happens between actors, and that, added to the flat 19th century prose, and the limitation Ramond imposed on himself (no one's words but Carboni's) just didn't give enough information, enough understanding.

And in *Albie Sachs*, prison life is a play about solitary confinement and its effects and in spite of the additional characters is not a rich subject. Albie Sachs' reactions and ruminations too, are not greatly enlightening.

## Revealing us to ourselves

### AUSTRALIA MAJESTIC

by Suzanne Spunner

*Australia Majestic* by Roger Pulver, Houghton Mifflin, Upperville, Melbourne, Vic. (opened February 28, 1986). Director: Malcolm Robertson, costume and design: Irene Nolan, choreography: Wendy Robertson, stage management: Terrie Hill. The doctor: Josephine Kelcher, Klaus: Robin Cuning, Hermann: John Arnold, Bill: Gene Van Dam, Rosa: Fern, William: Gluck (Professor).

Questions of war, exile and national identity are never far below the surface of Roger Pulver's work, perhaps because for this American-born Australian playwright they have constituted the problems in his own life. In his most recent play *Australia Majestic* the setting is the Second World War and a hotel in Victoria which has been transformed into a US army hospital.

When he chooses to, Pulver can write naturalistically with great facility, however his ability is an artificial guise and must be closely watched for naturalism is mostly his intended effect. Thus in *Australia Majestic*, the confrontation between the two American soldiers, the Australian orderly and the German interior couple, while it has considerable complications in terms of the individual characters and their motivations, it is ultimately a confrontation between national types and ideologies. However it is precisely because we believe in the clash at a personal level, that we accept and understand the symbolic transformations.

The transition from the particular to the general works best when the individual voices are strongest. Thus Hermann the Australian orderly and Klaus the German, because they are so fully drawn as individuals are most able to bear the weight of the generalisations they ultimately embody, whereas the Americans and the German doctor were shadowy as individuals because they were overdetermined at the outset and tended therefore to dissolve under the same weight of generalisation.

This problem was exacerbated because John Arnold as Hermann and Robin Cuning as Klaus gave the clearest and most subtle performances, but equally it was not simply a matter of the necessarily less comfortable performances by William Gluck, Gene Van Dam and Josephine Kelcher - they were only registering and compounding the confusion of the writing. The director, Malcolm Robertson was

faced with the task of restoring Gluck's and Kelcher's performances so that the play was not swamped with significance too soon, but the tension that resulted disrupted the surface and our agent's inability to comprehend and attend to the other level at the centre of the work.

By comparison John Arnold's performance was stunningly understated as Hermann he was laconic and merely impenetrable to the point of convincing us that naturalism was not a certain sort of tragedy were hard to find in the second half when he returns from the battle as a sane action that he has seen we realise just how malleable and culpable his ignorance was and in the final stages of the play we see him transformed from embryonic fascist to fascist in embryo and just beginning to assert his new found and dangerous selfhood. The transformation from the local dope to the regime demagogue is so terrifying, because we feel we have colluded in the empowerment of his earlier Aryanist resolve. Equally important is the realisation that the

Americans cannot be blamed as the corruptors of our youth, they were merely the catalysts of the change.

A further problem has me across out of the staging, the Upperville Playbox space was too small and claustrophobic it cramped the largeness of the issues and made more obvious and disturbing the disposition of Gluck and Kelcher's performance. On a larger stage and played in the round the short fragmented scenes and the direct set exits and entrances could have been effected more smoothly because the actors would have been freed from what in this production was, conventionally naturalistic staging.

Comparing *Australia Majestic* to Bennett's *Double*, which also deals with the wartime domestic re-orientation of Australia by American war scenes, Pulver makes it abundantly clear that the situation is a lot more complex than silk stockings and chewing gum. Perhaps because he has a less vested interest in believing in our national identity Pulver is able to reveal us to ourselves most sharply.



John Arnold as Hermann in Houghton's *Australia Majestic*. Photo: J.M. Bush.

# THEATRE/WA



State Rep./Joann Ambrose

## Raw material lacking

### PRIVATES ON PARADE and COP OUT

by Colin O'Brien

*Privates on Parade* by Peter Maffioletti, acted by Derek King, National Theatre Company, Playhouse Perth WA, opened January 26 (1988)

*Director:* Stephen Barry, *Designer:* Tony Tripp, *Choreography:* Barry Scragg, *Musical director:* Derek King, *Lighting:* Duncan Oak, *Stage Manager:* Christine Randall

*Major Plot:* Bill Kerr, Acting Capt. Dennis, Tim Brooke Barker Sgt Major Drummond, Leslie Wright, Sylvia Morgan, Penny Burnell, Flight Sgt Cartwright, Frank Johnson, Corporal Murray, James Beattie, L. Crystal, Bishop, Gina Hildebrand, Young Nurse Richard Williams, Private Fletcher, Alan Fletcher, Les, Ivan King, Cheng, Jerry Scragg.

*(Under-rehearsed)*

*Cop Out* by Cliff Green, Western Australian Theatre Company, Haymarket Theatre, WAIT, opened February 1988

*Director:* Robert Figgattier, *Designer:* Alan Murphy, *Stage Manager:* Leslie Smith, *Set:* John, Maggie White West, Louise Doyle, Rod Hall, Rosalind, Dennis, Michael Jones, David Fletcher, Jay Walsh, Barry Gosselin, Glenn Walsh, Ben Murray, Don Smith.

*(Under-rehearsed)*

The impression I gained from the previous Royal Shakespeare Company production of Peter Nichols' *Privates On Parade* was also, only confirmed by hearing the Playhouse's voices, their contribution to the Festival of Perth. Much perhaps as an amusing (yet so) and almost yet being, and almost of the latter day British Empire fighting a last ditch stand there, in Malaysia turns out finally to add up to little better than a crisis between it and



*Half the Man and Joseph Pacific*. From the TV series it derives "extraneous" camp-in-uniform of the "fuck you Freddy where's my eyeshadow" genre. Even *Joseph Pacific* comes a rather more serious strain, with a blend of sarcasm and earnest, the *Suey Wong* syndrome, the primitive-with-a-heart-of-gold (Asian version) characterised by wide (though slant) eyed comments such as "Englishmen he like cup of Earl Grey tea then plenty pee-jig".

Not that the National Theatre don't make a good fit of it, under Stephen Barry's tight direction. Barry Scragg's (an actual excellent choreography and Tony Tripp's well thought-out design). The show has been given better than the first time production, and is fine of a man. There was some nice handling of the smaller roles by James Beattie as an effing and blinding corporal, Frank Johnson and Richard Williams as members of the concert party. Alan Fletcher and Penny Downes made a warm and credible job of the young lovers, given any imagination with the underlying patronising of the Asian girl. Tim Brooke-Taylor was a personable,

flexible lead as a conservatively high-camp entertainer, but I seem to remember more fun in Dennis Quilly's playing. It was entertaining, but the problems on so some unconscious remains an irritant.

Across the river at the Hayman Theatre the WA Theatre Company are considerably offering a play by the Institute of Technology's current writer-in-residence, Cliff Green, *Cop Out* is an endorsement of TV cop shows - not, I hasten to add, the better ones such as *2-Cops* and *Softly Softly*. *Talk Force* - but that conventional rubbish which has hardened cops in soap-braun hats leaping from occasionally donated cars for the inevitable shoot-out after the inevitably car chase.

As *Cop Out* deals with the way the creative talents of songwriter (Green has been one, and should know), director and actors are communicated by sell-out producers dedicated to the lowest common denominator success formula. On the first night the act lacked sparkle, due to a combination of too-highly played by Rod Hall as the producer, a curious lack of timing and stress by Maggie White West as a cynical assistant, and some all too predictable scripting. A shame, too that an increasingly impressive actor in Don Smith was wasted, being too young for the role of fading fifteen while hope of the Australian drama scriptwriter.

As *Two* is devoted to a more screen effect of copshows, and perhaps violence on television in general. Here it is sponsored by the TV cops letting their fantasies of being tough cops dominate their "real" lives. Finding him to be serious one of the series, one of those cops, played with tough menace by Michael Loney, comes with two fellow player cops to harass the scriptwriter. They offer to charge her with the murder of his video self. Better scripted than the first act, it nevertheless don't quite make it. I was sorry that Robert Figgattier's first production in Western Australia (then well known to us as an actor) did not seem to give him the raw material to display his skills. He showed an ability to get the mechanics working well, and to make the play effectively, but with the actors' faces and timing he tended to miss the beat. Many of the longeurs were perhaps due to first-night nerves, and doubtless things picked up later in the season, but there remained inherent in the script and performance aspects which would hardly have made the play a success, even with the best will in the world.

## A trinity of solos

A MAN OF MANY PARTS  
KATHERINE MANSFIELD  
THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT

By Cliff Gilliam

*A Man Of Many Parts* by Jack Hibberd. Made in the West, Perth W.A. Opened February 28, 1988 (World Premiere)

Director: Ray Denode, Stage Manager: Helen Lindsay, Richard Hambley, Stage Manager: Stuart Nash, Light: Neville Teede

(Professional)

*The Case Of Katherine Mansfield* compiled and edited by Cathy Downes. Festival of Perth (Pitt)

Stage Management: Lighting: Ryan Newell, Mark Spinks, Direction assisted: John Burt

Katherine: Mansfield, Cathy Downes, Years of Modelling: Mary Paul Holmes

(Professional)

*Play: The Way To Do It* by Chris Harris and John David. Festival of Perth (Glenelg Theatre) Opened March 3, 1988

Director: John David, Producer: Carl Marrow, Manager: David McFarlane, With Chris Harris

(Professional)

The Actor, the Writer and the Puppeteer are each, in their own way, shapers of separate worlds, creators of brief universes which turn out to be our own interrogated by a compelled belief in the magic of shaping itself. These three furnished the subjects for the three plays "for solo performer" featured in this year's Festival. Taken together, the three plays and their performers offer a series of interpretative perspectives on the dialectic of creator and created, that mystery of entry into a renewed creation which is theatrical magic.

Neville Teede, as Noah Hope in Jack Hibberd's *A Man Of Many Parts* had the extremely difficult task of creating the role of an actor minutely "created" (and thus minutely constraining) by a writer, while Cathy Downes the actress literally "created" the writer Katherine Mansfield in her *The Case Of Katherine Mansfield*. And Chris Harris the writer, is creating Professor Powell and his wife, puppeteers down the curtains, as the perfect role for Chris Harris, actor, incidentally supplied in the loaded simplicity of his puppet Noah's performance an oblique illumination a reverse image of Hibberd's godfather-like Noah, positing like a complex, Powell as a youth made from rumour and desire, the puppet of his need, our need, for the magic of a show.

Neville Teede's performance as Mark Offord in Hibberd's fine melodrama *A Struck Of The Imaginative* inspired Hibberd to the creation for Teede of *A Man Of Many Parts* and a role, in Noah



Cathy Downes as Katherine Mansfield in *The Case Of Katherine Mansfield*

Hope, second-rate actor "testing" in poverty and bed-sitting room loneliness, locked in a struggle with threatening madness, which demands supreme sensitivity, a technical mastery and a sensitivity bordering on the impossible. The confessions, ramblings, meditations, memories, gossip rages and despair of Noah Hope in *Psych (pt 1) The Thief (Glenelg)*, continue as extended voyages by Hibberd in search of even more fabulous spaces of ambiguity than those locked up in Engle's act.

Writing in places as white heat, Hibberd sails into the space between the corners of

Reality and Illusion, where the Actor lives, and asks of the actor playing Noah what he chooses eerily, moment by moment, just how far back in the changing perspective of images of himself is the actor he must become to keep the ship on two coasts. And if this were not enough Teede Hibberd demands also an extraordinarily rigorous physical workout. Aided no doubt by Raymond Denode's finely discriminating and intelligent direction, Teede proved to have reserves of stamina adequate to both tasks, though I felt that towards the end of what turned out to be merely continuous exercises of such

demands, he listened somewhat (I was surprised to learn) all the opening night performance that some twenty minutes of Hibberd's original songs were excised from the production, since the play as given scored to the ten minutes or more longer than it need have been, and it seemed almost as if this unnecessary length was responsible for the slight flagging in Tiede's concentration, that loosening of his grip on an absorbed audience, which one noticed towards the end.) On the whole though, Tiede commanded the audience's straight attention, in relation to himself, to Noah's ironically exultant declamation at the end of the play — "What a performance!"

The play itself confirms Hibberd's status as one of our most important dramatists, and the more so because it knows the sheer genius, the comic extravagance and vulgarity which has always been a feature of Hibberd's language and scenes, with a subject and theme further reinforced than anything he has yet done from that exploration of a precariously Australian social and personal identity which has been his mainstay in the past. Noah's is a human condition, supra-national. And if the play cannot be counted, as I think it cannot, as unqualified success, it is because in Hibberd's probing of *The Human Condition* he cuts too fine the margin we need for humane relations to Noah himself. Noah is Human, All Too Human, but never fully alive, in a position to truly select our ears. Hibberd's manifold figures manipulate strings of words with a link once their links to Noah an animation ample enough for his concerns, but finally, without breathing life.

Where Noah Hopes, after him out to be, in the end, usually the live Hibberd's wooden instrument of Art, his puppet, Cathy Downes becomes in a quasi different sense the puppet of the dead writer she hovers with her dramatic compilation *The Case Of Katherine Mansfield*. So surely has she chosen her excerpts from the Letters, Journals and stories, and so skillfully has she woven them into two half hour acts which together bring a woman Mansfield out from behind her words, a beating woman in love with life and art, that Downes seems in performance to have become merely body, inhabited, possessed and moved by the master-artist who coughed away her precious life's blood in 1923, at the age of 34. Cathy Downes' performance is marvellously sensitive and beautifully paced. Like the life of Mansfield itself *The Case Of Katherine Mansfield* is both short, and it is were not for the redemptions of irony, almost painfully so. The production has a moving simplicity appropriate to its nature as a labour of love, and it finds a perfect focus in Downes' readings from

Mansfield's stories. Mansfield's lean, finely articulated prose is brought to vivid life and her achievement thrown into poignant relief by the context of Downes' performance, a performance which itself possesses "The mystery, radiance and afterglow" Mansfield aimed at in her writing. Only in her reading of *The Dicks House* did Downes wear in her superb control, in that it seemed to me she took the dramatic action, Kayah's invitation to "those Kakeys" to view the doll's house, a little too hastily. But to say so is merely to register a quibble — taken all in all *The Case Of Katherine Mansfield* is a delight both in concept and execution.

Also delightful on these counts is Chris Harris's one-man show *That's The Way To Do It*. In three half hour scenes, Harris traces the tradition of the Punch and Judy shows and the men who work there from 1730 through 1830 down to 1914. But this tracing is not in the least documentary, for each scene brings to life a member of the Punch family and explores his fate as both victim and guardian of puppetry's timeless magic.

The scene throughout is a puppet booth on Brighton Beach (or Bright Water's Stone, as it is known to the inmates of the lunatic sanatorium of puppetry the 19th century wit, dandy and pretentiousness, Professor Powell Harris treats his real-life audience for the most part as if it were

the pleasure-best machine distraction on the beach, and in the first and last scene he takes large but successful risks, using his considerable expertise in the conventions of carnival speaking, clowning and pantomime to exhaust, cajole and finally overcome an initial participation in the profoundly simple world of Mr Punch.

In the second scene, set in 1830, the booth is skillfully recast by the witty founder of this line of puppetry in the first scene is turned around, and we see a non-thumbed man floundering desperately to bring the puppet world to life, and failing miserably. The poignant comedy of this scene, the puppeteer harassed by his puppets and by his physical and temperamental unsuitability for the tradition which has claimed him contrasts vividly with the confidence we see and practiced clowning of the first and final scenes, stretching and deepening the impact of the whole performance. It will be a pity indeed if Harris attracts audiences under the illusion that he is "merely" a puppeteer — as writer and actor Harris has set out to reduce that customary "merely" by exploring the fundamental and problematic relation between man and the puppet. The joy and laughter for producers through the course of his superb comic technique as an actor is reinforced by the poetic wisdom which is the fruit of his explorations as a writer.



Chris Harris in *That's The Way To Do It* at the 1980 Perth Festival

# THEATRE SEATS

## MARIETTA REPLIES

Dear Sir,

Norman Kennell (March issue) would have been left with rather less egg on his face if he had only gone to the bother of getting at least some of his facts right before attacking my paragraph on the Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award in the *Northern Australian Marietta Column* on January 19.

He is quite wrong in stating that "saucy Marietta from the start opposed the National Critics Circle, and refused to join it..."

The fact is that I was a foundation

member of the music section of the National Critics Circle and even became its chairman. Later I resigned after becoming convinced that the music section, at least, was a waste of Australia Council money. One of my objections was that so few Sydney music critics had won all the outstanding performance that it became a case of choosing from among those that had been winnemed by all, rather than selecting from among the best.

Mr Kennell also sadly accuses me of "scooping" the announcement of the 1979 award winner two days before the official statement. What I wrote was "Who will win the Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award on Monday?" The favorite seems to be Doreen Warburton, director of the Q Theatre. But she has formidable competition in many of the other nominees" which I then listed. That's speculation, not announcing.

Norman Kennell then finishes his attack most tactfully by taking his incorrect statements and using them to make a side swipe at my character. I only hope he likes eggs.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Penzance  
Arts Editor  
The Australian

we were there, it offered little shade. Nimrod thoughtfully provided cardboard sunshades, but they seemed barely adequate in terms of comfort sitting on dirt for more than two hours doesn't rate very high, but unlike the Festival of Sydney shows we'd attended in Hyde Park earlier in the week, there were no cushions provided.

And so to the play which Kennell found "as fresh and pleasing today as when first presented." I found it slow moving, clogged with ponderous exposition and explanation which obviously bored the kids. The first half contained little use of the "audience participation" noted by the reviewer and, as he suggests, much of the campy humour went straight over the kids' heads. He talks of a "much more compact production" than Ken Kesler's famous *Treasure Island*, but that is putting the best construction on it. This production was downright static and many of the young audience were correspondingly restive. I doubt whether the parents and grandparents who had to explain to their young charges that they couldn't go home yet because this was an island and you had to wait for the ferry, shared Norman Kennell's obvious pleasure.

One last word. Kennell didn't mention the ferry ride at all, yet for my money it was the best part of the show. On the outward journey we were joined by two pirates in full costume. This reduced one of my lot to abject terror, but he was her heart when he stopped drenching the passengers with his water pistol and let her wash him instead. There followed banister exchanges with RAN sailors as we passed Garden Island and roasting choruses of "What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor" (the show itself had no singing). I wouldn't say the ride alone was worth the price of admission, but I suspect it is what the kids will remember.

Derek Peat,  
Sydney, N.S.W.

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## INDIGESTIBLE PIRATES

Dear Sir,

One man's meat may give another violent indigestion, so I must add a note of dissent to Norman Kennell's glowing comments about *Pirates At The Bay* (TA February). I attended the Nimrod production at Clark Island with three small children and unlike those "dear grandparents" in Kennell's review, I didn't get "the pleasure of watching the children's enjoyment", because they didn't enjoy themselves much.

There were several reasons for this. Kennell talks of the amphitheatre "comfortably accommodating" the audience, but on the burning hot day

# BOOKS



By John McCallum

## Unreality on the screen

**Peter Finch: A biography**, by Trader Faulkner (Gargoyle & Robertson)  
**Amnesia in the Dark: Hollywood and the Gift of Unreality**, by David Thomson (Hutchinson, rrp \$47.60)  
**The Changing Face of Movie**, by Hugo Cole (Hutchinson, rrp \$28.60)  
**Snap on the Vexin**, by Joseph Spector (Dove, Tudor Distributors, rrp \$4.95)

One of the most striking things about a film of Peter Finch, if you watch it these days, is your knowledge that he is dead. He is was an actor of such discretion and humanity on the screen that the thought of his considering corpses suggests a great deal about the exposure of film as a medium. The fact that the actor whose humanity you feel so strongly in the cinema is dead, is a mere extension of what you always know when you watch a film: that in spite of its fundamental anti-life intention to "reality"

photographic, mythical realism it deals with images which are in a basic and important sense unreal. Movies can take dreams, fantasies and ideas and make them with an everyday realism, because of the intuitively understood realism of photography, which is utterly bogus. As David Thomson argues on *Amnesia in the Dark*, when this power is at the service of an industry such as Hollywood was for a large part of this century, it becomes quite dangerous. Place wanted to exclude poets from his Republic, because, through the power of their art, they could make lies — fiction — look like truth. He would have been really worried about movies.

*Amnesia in the Dark* is a provocative

book. Like much of the writing which it contains to inspire it is often smart and sometimes — full of pop sociology and clever generalisation. And yet it is also full of insight and convincing argument. It suggests, indirectly, that film as the hands of the Hollywood studios has fundamentally confused dream and reality for the imaginary mass audience which the "industry" demands for its survival. Thomson argues that it is a sociological phenomenon, rather than an art, but he also implies that it is an essential philosophical reflection of our times. He



says that even if, as a thespian in 1955, you went to go to the theatre expecting a scorable evening, with actors and friends, and got there to find a sign saying you would instead sit, in effect alone, watching changing images of light on a screen. Think how disappointed you would be. The actors' direction of their audiences has led to a shift of fiction, or dreams, away from the real. Movies are still terrific of course but they can be dangerous if they're all you've got.

With Peter Finch there is an added strangeness in that he seems to have been all art. For me he will always be Dr Daniel Hirsch from *Sweden Through Sweden*, and yet it is hard to reconcile this nature, gentle man, supporting his patients, while the film

shows his personal problems appear only gradually, with the wild, big Finch portrayed by Trader Faulkner in his biography, Peter Finch Finch never seems to have let the maturity and sensitivity he shows on screen interfere with his personal life. Though undoubtedly kind, generous and a highly serious actor, he comes across in this book, as an innately selfish boy. In spite of an egotistical, often cruel, way of behaving, particularly with his modest stream of women, he appears as oddly attractive, largely because of his obvious sincerity and naive romanticism.

He led a romantic life, or had it forced upon him. Rejected by his family, leaving to beg as a beg in India, a young orphan in Sydney, then a struggling stage actor — he began the career for which he is now known only in his last three, Faulkner argues that his film career was encouraged. He accepted the wrong parts, and was far rarer than realised not offered the parts which could have made him an international star much earlier. When he died in 1973 he was on the verge of a new period which could have made him one of the greats.

Faulkner's biography of him, although desperately in need of a good edition, is very readable. It is sympathetic and friendly without being uncritical. It relies heavily on interviews with all of the various personalities who worked with him, which often leads to repetition and chronological confusion, but it gives an interesting portrait of a man who led a very simple life which produced more than a beloved Finch delivered in his acting.

Hugo Cole's *The Changing Face of Movie* is an intelligent (and expensive) book, which suffers by attempting too little. In spite of disclaimers in the preface it reveals the fundamental conservatism and insularity of many people involved in highbrow movie. To someone familiar with such a self-analytical world as theatre, or even film or literature, the gametes of this book seem innocuous. Yet if criticism are as simplistic and secure to their traditions as the book implies, then they may need such simplistic analysis of their social and professional roles. Otherwise it is rather self-indulgent.

*Snap on the Vexin* is a review of a specialist work, which it is beyond my power to review constructively. I can only pass on Joseph Spector's proud injunction, the preface to all his analysis of technique, that there is No Substitute for Perfect Information.

# THEATRE GUIDE

## ACT THEATRE

CANBERRA REPERTORY (47 4222)  
Theatre Three: *Strawfest*, *Furlo* by  
Stephen Polakoff, director Ken Roucher  
April 2-26.

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8311)  
As Enchant with Kevin Johnson April 23  
FORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY  
Playhouse (49 4488)  
Landscape theatre: *Out At Sea* by  
Mozack April 2-15  
*Passer From Hollywood* by Neil Simon  
April 21 - May 12  
PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)

ROBINSON MAIRN THEATRE, To 3 April  
Canberra Philharmonic Society: *No No  
Nanette* April 20 - May 10  
Canberra Opera Society: *The Threepenny  
Opera* by Brecht and Weill April 20 - May  
10

## DANCE

AND ARTS CENTRE (49 4387)

One Extra Dance Company April 2-16  
Human Voids Dance Company: *Act II  
Exhibition of Performing Arts* April 17 -  
20

## CONCERTS

PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)  
Walter Sagers Racial April 11, 12.

For concert contact Arie Wilton on 49 3111

## NSW THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH  
WALES (357 1611)

School Tour: *Amorfin*, drama for  
infants and primary, Central and Far West  
until April 18.

*Scenepore*, a television musical area title  
for infants, primary and secondary,  
metropolitan areas until April 12

Adult Tour: *Flameth* by Roger Hall,  
directed by Don Mackay with Paul Kerr,  
Anne Phelan and Peter Cummins  
Statewide until April 30

AXIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS  
(969 8202)

Court House Hotel, Taylor Square:  
*Deliver us Orbs* by Robert and David  
Landsberry, directed by Malcolm  
Frawley, music by Gary Smith, with Susan  
Asquith and Curt Janson Throughout  
April

Aginorant Hotel Broadway  
*Feud and Gravel* by Rick Mace and  
Malcolm Lowrey, directed by Malcolm  
Frawley, with music by Sandra Ridgwell  
Throughout April

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)  
*Was My Amour?* by N F Simpson,  
directed by Max Phappi, with Lucy  
Charles, Maggie Dennis, Jan Ewing, Hilary  
Lankum, Bronwen Phillips, Charlie  
Strachan and Greg Radford Into April  
FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY  
(82 1601)

*The Waters of Theatre in Dramatic Form*  
by Gary Baxter, directed by Chris Lewis,  
with Angela Hanna, Anthony Martin and  
Gary Baxter Touring to schools  
throughout April

St James Playhouse  
*Where About of Virginia Woolf?* by  
Edward Albee, directed by Gary Baxter  
School performances throughout April  
Randwick Entertainment Centre

*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, directed by Gary Baxter. Schools performances throughout April.

**FRANK STRAIN'S BULL BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT** (337 8837)

*That's What's Musical* review from the turn of the century to today, with Neil Brophy, Barbara Wendon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Larian, directed by George Gardin. Throughout April.

**GENSIAN THEATRE** (35 3648)

*The Deep Blue Sea* by Terence Rattigan, directed by Narene Fene. Until end April.

**HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE** (312 3411)

*Find The Lady* by Michael Perrine, directed by Shaun Gorton, with Mellicie Sadler, Gordon Poole, Audley Lamb and Myna Noblett. Until April 12 with possible extension.

**HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY** (36 3326)

*The Imaginary Invalid* by Moliere, directed Aerie Norrie. To May 3.

**KIRIBILLI PUB THEATRE** (92 1615)

*The 28th Show* by P P Cramer, directed by Richardson Young, music by Adrian Morgan, with Denny Adcock, Margie McCue, Peter Corbett, Ross Haskins and Laura Gabriel. Throughout April.

**LIES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS** (338 5636)

*Colours*, a programme of folk songs and sketches describing colonial Australia devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Sator for infants, primary and secondary, NSW country throughout April.

**MARIAN STREET THEATRE** (498 3866)

*Rare for Your Money*, a new Australian musical based on the book by David Neutson and music by John Kemman and John McKellar, directed by Alanne Douglas. Commences mid April.

**MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA** (2 8388)

Recording Hall, S O H

*Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Corps* written by Patrick Cook, directed by Richard Bradshaw, with music by Robyn Archer. Until April 19.

**MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT** (969 8332)

*Just Love* by Min Henry Wood, directed by Alison Harvey, with Alison Harvey, Bernadette Hougham, Mal Carmont and Christine Carrones. Throughout April.

**MUSIC LOFT THEATRE** (977 6585)

*Caught in the Act*, a variety review produced by William Orr, with Queensie Paul, Darryl Stewart, Myke Parker and Peter McGowan. Throughout April.

**NEW THEATRE** (519 3403)

*Brown Pelican* by George Sillars, directed by Kay McPhillips, with David Ives, Alan Docker, Peter Cowan, David Kretzke, Tim McKinnis, Judy Mahoney, Christine

Logan and Carmel Mullin. Until April 19. New production commences and April.

**NIMMOO THEATRE** (699 5003)

*Upstairs: The House of the Deaf Man* by John Anthony King directed by John Bell, with Paul Barrman, Vivienne Garrett, Joseph Funn, Kerry Walker and Anne Vebika. Until April 13.

*Clouds* by Michael Frayne, directed by Ned Arfield, with Jennifer Hagen, John McTernan and Paul Brittan. Commences April 23.

Downstairs: *Chatterboxes!* workshopped by Geoffrey Rush with Geoffrey Rush, Gillian Hyde, Pat Thompson, Russell Newman and Tony Taylor. Commences April 16.

*Seymour Cassel: Ubu* by Alfred Jarry, directed by Peter Brook and presented by the Centre for International Theatre Creations, Paris. April 8, 9, 10, 14 and 15.

*The 81*, based on The Mountain People by Colin Turnbull, directed by Peter Brook and presented by the Centre for International Theatre Creations, Paris. April 11 and 12.

**NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF** (337 1204)

*The "SHEEP" Jaws*, for primary schools and *Arrows Speak Louder Than Words* for secondary schools, both directed by Ian Watson, with Nola Colston, David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lano. Metropolitan area throughout April.

**PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY** (38 7211)

*Children* by A R Gurney Jnr, directed by Graham Corry, with Ursula Shearing, and Michael Long. Commences April 16.

**Q THEATRE** (947 31 5715)

*Always French* by Alan Ayckbourn, Perth until April 12, Orange from April 15-19 and Bankstown from April 23-26.

**THE ROCKS PLAYERS** (668 8254 8293)

153 Globe Point Road, Globe

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, directed by Bill Pepper. Throughout April.

*Toad of Toad Hall* by A A Milne, directed by Julia Dunscombe. Commences April 5.

**RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY** 8012 Chenier Road by Grahame Bond and Jim Burton. To April 12.

**SEYMOUR CENTRE** (692 8535)

*A Star Is Born* with Robyn Archer. Commences April 26.

**SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE** (585 3948)

Four drama workshops on weekend, includes playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video.

Shopfront Caravan touring country towns, and schools with *Chatterbox* and *The Tale* plus created by the cast and directed by Errol Bray.

Youth Theatre Showcase. Also for

Shakespeare devised and directed by Errol Bray and performed by Shopfront Caravan April 11, 12, 18 and 19.

*Calver's Travels* based on Jonathan Swift and devised and performed by the Australian Theatre for Young People. April 25 and 26.

**SIDESHOW THEATRE COMPANY** Hippodrome Theatre, Goulburn Street.

*Local original concept* by Michael Mason, based on Wedgwood, directed by Michael Mason, with FILL Armore, Kevin English, Bernadette Ludwig and Simon Reginald.

**SPEAKEASY THEATRE RESTAURANT** (662 7442)

*That's Showbiz* produced and directed by Alan Lane with Garry Gorman, Duane Murray, Peter Noble and Susan Jays. Throughout April.

**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY** (2 8588)

*Drama Theatre S O H*

*No Name, No Face, No Drift* by Bob Herbert, directed by George Ogilvie, with Mel Gibson and Nora Harebourn. Commences April 15.

Recording Hall, S O H

*The Greeting Mr Act Together and Taking It On: The Road* by Graham Croy and Nancy Ford, directed by Richard Wherrett and Terence Clarke, with Narene Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Judy Morris and George Spinks. Commences April 23.

**THEATRE ROYAL** (231 8111)

*The Old Country* by Alan Bennett, directed by Robin Lippard, with Robert Morley, Barbara White, Walfre Eaton, Margo Lee, Robert van Marckdenberg and Louisa Page. Until April 19.

*Pajama Tops* by Marjorie Green and Ed Feibert, with John Inman. Commences April 22.

## DANCE

**THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET** (2 9588)

Opera Theatre, S O H

Programme I - *Symphony in C* choreography George Balanchine, Music Georges Bizet, *Schéhérazade* choreography David Lichine, music Johann Strauss II. Until April 12.

Programme II - *Rasmonda* choreographed by Narene after Petipa, music by Giacomini. Commences April 18.

**REGENT TRIPATRE** (235 7986)

Berlin Komische Oper Ballet

*Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky. April 5, 6, 8, 10, 13 & 14.

*Arab de Corus*, choreographed by John Cranko, music by Stravinsky, *Fourth Symphony* choreographed by Tom Schilling, music by Mozart, *Evening* Dances choreographed by Tom Schilling.

music by Schubert and *La Mer* choreographed by Tom Schilling, music by Debussy April 11 only

For further contact Carole Long on 333 1200/400 3610

## QLD THEATRE

### ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)

*The Sleeping Prince* by Tannus Rattigan, director, Jason Savage, with Jan Thomson, Jennifer Debenham, Jack E. Brown To April 26

### BRISBANE ACTORS' COMPANY (221 9511)

at the Cinema Box *Passion* by Jack Hoffman, director, Bruce Parr, designer, David Chidmister, with Elizabeth Falconer, Jennifer Flowers, Kay Perry, To April 12

### LA ROUTE (36 1823)

*Angel City* by Sam Shepard April 11-May 10

### POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE

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**QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 9908)**

On tour Brisbane, *The Position Manoeuvres* with Rival Rugs Tony and Ryle with *The Dream Time*  
*Darling Downs* QTC, *The Forest of Green Halls* Pond, director, Lloyd Nickson, and *The Boy Who Dared To* by Lloyd Nickson, director, Colin Shearsaker

North West, Wayne Roland Brown, *Spanish Tragic*  
Townsville and District, Alexander Morcos, *Spanish Dances*

Cape York, Michelle and Mike Jackson  
Secondary Schools QTC, *Danger* by Lloyd Nickson and *The Taming of Don* and *Sharon* by Robin Watson

### QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 3861)

8080 Theatres (Bookings 221 5177)  
*The Flamingo of the Western World* by J M Syggs, director, Mick Rodger, designer, Mike Bridges, with Geoff Cartwright, Vivienne Davis, Judith Anderson April 11 - May 3

### TN COMPANY (52 3622)

*Alce or the Associate Trial* by Ian Watson, director, John Nelson, with Geoff Cartwright and Sally McKenzie To April 12  
*Ereol Flann's Great Big Adventure Book*

*for Boar* by Rob George, director, John Nelson, with Geoff Maccock and Judith Anderson April 17 - May 10

### TOOWOOMBA ARTS THEATRE (30 1380)

*Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, director, David Addenbrooke, with Murray Poy, Robert Kaiton, Ken Ineson  
Toowoomba April 1-12, La Bore, May 13-17, New England University May 30 - June 3

### TOWNSVILLE CIVIC THEATRE (72 2677)

*Swir Win* by Peter Hoffs Puppets April 7-10

## DANCE

### QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 1253)

*Push comes to Shove* compiled by Robert Osmotherly. On tour in Central West with Qld Arts Council

## OPERA

### QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (221 7749)

*The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart. On tour, South East Qld with Qld Arts Council  
**HER MAJESTY'S (221 3771)**

Australian Opera, *Falstaff* and *La Traviata* April 25-May 3

## CONCERTS

### Townsville Civic Theatre (72 2677)

Max Bygraves in Concert April 11, 12

For further contact Don Bacheler on 224 5911

## SA THEATRE

### ARTS THEATRE (212 5177)

*Francesca's Revenge* by Ian Levin, director, Murray George April 19-26

### FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 6121)

*Evie* by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd

Webber, director, Harold Prince. From April 28

### Q THEATRE (222 5651)

Halliday Street *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, director, Jean Marshall Wed, Sat, April 9-10

### THE SPACE (51 6621)

Sydney Theatre Company *The Gem of the East* Together And Taking It On The Road by Croy and Ford, director, Richard Wherrett, with Nancey Hayes and Geraldine Turner To April 19  
Perth Festival Productions *That's The Way To Do A Woman* and performed by Chris Harris and John David April 22 - May 3

### STATE THEATRE COMPANY (51 3831)

Playhouse *Walden* *Masters* *Circle* translated by Edward Marshall Ross, director, Colin George To April 12  
**THEATRE GUILD ACTING CO**

Old Town Hall Theatre *War Pests*, an anthology 10 am, April 22-30, 8pm April 29, 30, continuing into May  
**TROUPE (31 6764)**

At the Red Shed *Cuppin and Company* by Doreen Clarke and David Allen, director, David Allen To April 5

## CONCERTS

### ADELAIDE TOWN HALL

Musica Viva Tokyo Quartet playing Haydn, Schubert and Mendelssohn April 21

ABC Concerts Adelaide Symphony Orchestra with guest conductor Ezra Racklin and guest soloist Andre La Plante April 17, 18, 19, 22

French Chamber Orchestra, La Grande Eglise a la Chambre et le Roi, conductor, Jean Claude Malgoures Includes Bach's Coffee Cantata played in period costume April 28

For further contact Eddie Reif on 225 8970

## TAS THEATRE

### POLYDON THEATRE (34 8818)

*The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, director, Don Gay with Havel Agent, Don Gay, Chris Harvey and Rosemary Macgregor

Deight Brown Theatre, Rosny College. April 9-12. Then touring to Launceston, Burnie and Devonport

#### SALAMANCA (23 5259)

Touring schools in North and North West Tasmania including Flinders Island Museum, *Drink The Mares* for Upper Primary and Secondary, *Man Friday and Qui Ai Sei* for Secondary

#### TASMANIA PUPPET THEATRE 923 (23 7996)

*Nashville, the Last Tasmanian Tiger* by John Lane (from MAGPIE), puppets by Axel Axelrad, director, Peter Wilson. For Infants and Primary

*The Song of Pussie and Auli*, a contemporary version of the traditional lullaby Pussie and Judy. For High Schools and Colleges, adapted version available for adults and pub shows

Saturday morning shows at Salamanca Market

#### THEATRE ROYAL (14 6326)

Theatre Royal Light Opera Company *The Shark and Wine Merchant Show*, director, Scott Joss. April 11-26

For entries contact the Editorial Office on (049) 67 4478

## VIC THEATRE

#### ALEXANDER THEATRE (343 2828)

Theatre des jeunes presents *The Lotus of Sand*

*Solene Plante: Plante's Life* April 15-19  
Chickadee Light Opera Co *Oktoberfest* April 23 - May 10

#### ARENA THEATRE (24 9667)

Schools programme *The Power Ear* by Peter Skafar, senior secondary *The Whisk - The Biggest Thing That Ever Grew* by Ken Kribben, junior secondary touring

Extensive community-access drama classes

#### ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (329 4325)

*Flammar* by Roger Hall, director, Don Mackay. Touring NSW (country) and Tasmania To May 3

Richard Stilgus, English musical comedian April 5 - 26  
Modern Mime Theatre, Michael Farhead To May 9

#### AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (340 7133)

Back Theatre: *Memento A Back Street Theatre Presentation* To April 19. And

*Screen* by Chris Dickson

#### COMEDY CAFE

With Rod Quantock and co  
COMEDY THEATRE (663 4993)

Spike Adigun and Furch

#### CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (878 6722)

*Who What When and Where?*, *Jango Asenbo and the Gods of Green Glass*

Schools touring

#### FLYING TRAPPEZE CAFE (41 3327)

*Fishing Is Love Again* - songs from the show by Jim Gornall and Libby Drake To April 5

*Slipped Disc* with Alan Pentland and the Shimmers

#### HOODLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (43 4883)

Playbox Downstairs, *Countdown* by Trevor Griffiths, director, Malcolm Robertson, designer, Sandra Mullock with Rod Tingwell and Bill Zappa

Playbox Upstairs *Double Down At The Bottom of the World* by David Allen, director, Murray Copleish, designer, Jennie Tan, with Carlie Guntner

#### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (562 3211)

*Sea of Brins* starring Reg Livermore, director, Peter Raley, with the Wellington Beasts Band

#### LAST LAUGH THEATRE

#### RESTAURANT (419 6236)

*The Rascal Family With The Lot* To April 5

*Real Stars* (USA) from April 11

#### LA MAMA (338 4580)

*Someone Breaks* by Barry Dickson (playwright in residence) To April 27

#### MID HOBBE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4009)

Russell Street Theatre *Big River* by Alex Barns, director, John Samson, with Sandy Gere, designer, Anna Fawcett To May 31  
Athensman Theatre *Reverence and Goodness Are Dead* by Tom Stoppard, director Bruce Mylen, designer Peter Corrigan. In repertory with *Wander* for four weeks from June 2

Athensman 2 *As We Are* devised and performed by Beverly Dunn, director, Don Mackay

Also *Curious Up*, Schools Play Experience Service and Tribunalary Playmings

#### PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818 8430)

*Coin Strings and Things* by Bart Cooper

#### MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES

Roam Theatre Group (763 1883)

Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702)

Headberg Rep (49 2263)

Mulvena Theatre Co (211 0820)

Pumpkin Theatre (42 8337)

Williamstown Little Theatre (578 4267)

1812 Theatre (796 8642)

For entries contact Left Cartroughs on 781 1777

## WA THEATRE

#### RAYMAN THEATRE (356 7026)

Theatrebox (sound) *The Countess Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht, director, Tony Nichols

#### HOLE IN THE WALL (361 2403)

Joseph Conrad *Guns Afloat* by David Allen, director, Edgar Mascall To April 26

#### NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY (352 3909)

Playhouse *Terrifying North* by David Williamson, director, Stephen Barry To April 12

*The Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare, an adapted version, director, Jenny McKen, April 17 - May 10

THE *Double* by Richard Lalloch. For lower primary *Madeline* Martin devised by the team for upper primary. On tour.

#### WA ARTS COUNCIL

*Wish the 8th Book* A life of Henry Lawson with Leonard Teale April 21 - May 11

## DANCE

#### WA BALLET COMPANY

*Catherine's Wedding*, *Concerto Grosso* *The Prince* *Sparks* artistic director, Gail Welsh North West Tour with WA Arts Council

## CONCERTS

#### THE CONCERT HALL

ABC Concerts WA Symphony Orchestra with University Choral Society, conductor, Georg Tattler April 2

WA Symphony Orchestra with Idil Bakt (soprano), conductor, David Meadham April 11

WASO with Tamara Herman (soprano), conductor, Gerald Knag April 12

La Grande Ensemble et la Chambre du Roy, conductor, Jean-Claude Malgoure April 26

For entries contact Julie Ashmore on 299 6439



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### THESPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 22

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

- The Arab in repose faces facts (7)
- One on the way up around the member - a royal (7)
- Scottish son, deity and collaborator in handcrafts (7)
- Relied on a soft, delicate note (7)
- Resent for the board and superficial, we hear (7, 8)
- Then little toward wanting in French goes to state capital (8)
- Talks on readings in French literature (8)
- You follow the line on the front with the swinging body (8)
- Meted out food for herding cattle? (8)
- It's worse than being the \_\_\_\_\_ (8) (Warning: Four Goshes) (7)
- Deviously ensure Mr. Balthazar with this companion (7)
- Seddy upsets and commends (7)
- Drying the hair, without a grand coronet's sacrament actually (7)

### Down

- The Phantoms who work still in four directions (7)
- Grant the Scot a musical instrument to listen to (9)
- Get angry, for example, about a colour (3)
- He believes in the first (8)
- Game in which a cheater lords it over a little man (5)
- Violence could on last be a short, poor performer (8)
- A link one might find on the beach (5)
- Put one's clothes on again for satisfaction (7)
- As most Sam makes one tick (8)
- Backpedalling and writing poetry again (8)
- Drink up and be in after a short hour in the cocktails (8)

The first correct entry drawn on April 25 will receive one year's free subscription to *Theatre Australia*

